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GEORGE ELIOT

The Art preserving
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ADAM BELL

TO THE READER

THE AUTHOR OF THE
"HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON"
AND
"THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF NEW-YORK"

THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

NEW-YORK
JAMES B. LEECH
1840



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ADAM BEDE.

BY

GEORGE ELIOT.

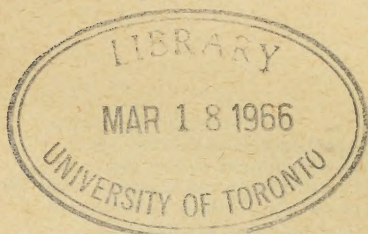
“So that ye may have
Clear images before your gladdened eyes
Of nature's unambitious underwood,
And flowers that prosper in the shade. And when
I speak of such among the flock as swerved
Or fell, those only shall be singled out
Upon whose lapse, or error, something more
Than brotherly forgiveness may attend.”

—Wordsworth.

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ADAM BEDE.

CHAPTER I.

THE WORKSHOP.

WITH a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen I will show you the roomy workshop of Mr. Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder, in the village of Hayslope, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June, in the year of our Lord 1799.

The afternoon sun was warm on the five workmen there, busy upon doors and window-frames and wainscoting. A scent of pine wood from a tent-like pile of planks outside the open door mingled itself with the scent of the elder-bushes which were spreading their summer snow close to the open window opposite; the slanting sunbeams shone through the transparent shavings that flew before the steady plane, and lit up the fine grain of the oak paneling which stood propped against the wall. On a heap of those soft shavings a rough gray shepherd-dog had made himself a pleasant bed, and was lying with his nose between his fore-paws, occasionally wrinkling his brows to cast a glance at the tallest of the five workmen, who was carving a shield in the centre of a wooden mantelpiece. It was to this workman that the strong barytone belonged which was heard above the sound of plane and hammer, singing,

“Awake my soul, and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth”

Here some measurement was to be taken which required more concentrated attention, and the sonorous voice subsided

into a low whistle ; but it presently broke out again with renewed vigor,

“ Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noonday clear.”

Such a voice could only come from a broad chest, and the broad chest belonged to a large-boned, muscular man, nearly six feet high, with a back so flat and a head so well poised that when he drew himself up to take a more distant survey of his work he had the air of a soldier standing at ease. The sleeve rolled up above the elbow showed an arm that was likely to win the prize for feats of strength ; yet the long, supple hand, with its broad finger-tips, looked ready for works of skill. In his tall stalwartness Adam Bede was a Saxon, and justified his name ; but the jet-black hair, made the more noticeable by its contrast with the light paper cap, and the keen glance of the dark eyes that shone from under strongly-marked, prominent, and mobile eyebrows, indicated a mixture of Celtic blood. The face was large and roughly hewn, and when in repose had no other beauty than such as belongs to an expression of good-humored, honest intelligence.

It is clear at a glance that the next workman is Adam's brother. He is nearly as tall ; he has the same type of features, the same hue of hair and complexion ; but the strength of the family likeness seems only to render more conspicuous the remarkable difference of expression both in form and face. Seth's broad shoulders have a slight stoop ; his eyes are gray ; his eyebrows have less prominence and more repose than his brother's ; and his glance, instead of being keen, is confiding and benignant. He has thrown off his paper cap, and you see that his hair is not thick and straight, like Adam's, but thin and wavy, allowing you to discern the exact contour of a coronal arch that predominates very decidedly over the brow.

The idle tramps always felt sure they could get a copper from Seth ; they scarcely ever spoke to Adam.

The concert of the tools and Adam's voice was at last broken by Seth, who, lifting the door at which he had been working intently, placed it against the wall, and said,

“ There ! I've finished my door to-day, anyhow.”

The workmen all looked up ; Jim Salt, a burly red-haired man, known as Sandy Jim, paused from his planing, and Adam said to Seth, with a sharp glance of surprise,

“ What ! dost think thee'st finished the door ? ”

"Ay, sure," said Seth, with answering surprise, "what's awanting to't?"

A loud roar of laughter from the other three workmen made Seth look round confusedly. Adam did not join in the laughter, but there was a slight smile on his face as he said, in a gentler tone than before,

"Why, thee'st forgot the panels."

The laughter burst out afresh as Seth clapped his hands to his head, and colored over brow and crown.

"Hooray!" shouted a small lithe fellow, called Wiry Ben, running forward and seizing the door. "We'll hang up th' door at fur end o' th' shop an' write on't, 'Seth Bede, the Methody, his work.' Here, Jim, lend's hould o' th' red-pot."

"Nonsense!" said Adam. "Let it alone, Ben Cranage. You'll mayhap be making such a slip yourself some day; you'll laugh o' th' other side o' your mouth then."

"Catch me at it, Adam. It'll be a good while afore my head's full o' th' Methodies," said Ben.

"Nay, but it's often full o' drink, and that's worse."

Ben, however, had now got the "red-pot" in his hand, and was about to begin writing his inscription, making, by way of preliminary, an imaginary S in the air.

"Let it alone, will you?" Adam called out, laying down his tools, striding up to Ben, and seizing his right shoulder. "Let it alone, or I'll shake the soul out o' your body."

Ben shook in Adam's iron grasp, but, like a plucky small man as he was, he didn't mean to give in. With his left hand he snatched the brush from his powerless right, and made a movement as if he would perform the feat of writing with his left. In a moment Adam turned him round, seized his other shoulder, and, pushing him along, pinned him against the wall. But now Seth spoke.

"Let be, Addy, let be. Ben will be joking. Why, he's i' the right to laugh at me. I canna help laughing at myself."

"I shan't loose him till he promises to let the door alone," said Adam.

"Come, Ben, lad," said Seth, in a persuasive tone, "don't let's have a quarrel about it. You know Adam will have his way. You may's well try to turn a wagon in a narrow lane. Say you'll leave the door alone, and make an end on't."

"I binna frightened at Adam," said Ben, "but I donna mind sayin' as I'll let't alone at yare askin', Seth."

"Come, that's wise of you, Ben," said Adam, laughing and relaxing his grasp.

They all returned to their work now ; but Wiry Ben, having had the worst in the bodily contest, was bent on retrieving that humiliation by a success in sarcasm.

"Which was ye thinkin' on, Seth," he began—"the pretty parson's face or her sarmunt when ye forgot the panel?"

"Come and hear her, Ben," said Seth, good-humoredly ; "she's going to preach on the Green to-night ; happen ye'd get something to think on yourself then, instead o' those wicked songs ye're so fond on. Ye might get religion, and that 'ud be the best day's earnings y' ever made."

"All i' good time for that, Seth ; I'll think about that when I'm a-going' to settle i' life ; bachelors doesn't want such heavy earnin's. Happen I shall do the coortin' and the religion both together as ye do, Seth ; but ye wouldna ha' me get converted an' chop in atween ye an' the pretty preacher, an' carry her aff?"

"No fear o' that, Ben ; she's neither for you nor for me to win, I doubt. Only you come and hear her, and you won't speak lightly on her again."

"Well, I'm half a mind t' ha' a look at her to-night, if there isn't good company at the Holly Bush. What'll she tek for her text? Happen ye can tell me, Seth, if so be as I shouldna come up i' time for't. Will't be 'What comes ye out for to see? A prophetess? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophetess'—a uncommon pretty young woman."

"Come, Ben," said Adam, rather sternly, "you let the words o' the Bible alone ; you're going too far now."

"What ! are ye a-turnin' roun', Adam ? I thought ye war dead again th' women preachin' a while ago?"

"Nay, I'm not turnin' noway. I said naught about the women preachin' ; I said, You let the Bible alone ; you've got a jest-book, han't you, as you're rare and proud on? Keep your dirty fingers to that."

"Why, y' are gettin' as big a saint as Seth. Y' are goin' to th' preachin' to-night, I should think. Ye'll do finely t' lead the singin'. But I dun know what Parson Irwine 'ull say at's gran' favright Adam Bede a-turnin' Methody."

"Never do you bother yourself about me, Ben. I'm not a-going to turn Methodist any more nor you are—though it's like enough you'll turn to something worse. Mester Irwine's got more sense nor to meddle wi' people's doing as they like in religion. That's between themselves and God, as he's said to me many a time."

"Ay, ay ; but he's none so fond o' your dissenters, for all that."

"Maybe ; I'm none so fond o' Josh Tod's thick ale, but I don't hinder you from making a fool o' yourself wi't."

There was a laugh at this thrust of Adam's, but Seth said, very seriously,

"Nay, nay, Addy, thee mustna say as any body's religion's like thick ale. Thee dostna believe but what the dissenters and the Methodists have got the root o' the matter as well as the church folks."

"Nay, Seth, lad ; I'm not for laughing at no man's religion. Let 'em follow their consciences, that's all. Only I think it 'ud be better if their consciences 'ud let 'em stay quiet i' the church—there's a deal to be learnt there. And there's such a thing as being over-speritil ; we must have something beside Gospel i' this world. Look at the canals, an' th' aqueducts, an' th' coal-pit engines, and Arkwright's mills there at Cromford ; a man must learn summat beside Gospel to make them things, I reckon. But t' hear some o' them preachers, you'd think a man must be doing nothing all's life but shutting's eyes and looking what's a-going on inside him. I know a man must have the love o' God in his soul, and the Bible's God's word. But what does the Bible say ? Why, it says as God put his sperrit into the workman as built the tabernacle, to make him do all the carved work and things as wanted a nice hand. And this is my way o' looking at it ; there's the sperrit o' God in all things and all times—week-day as well as Sunday—and i' the great works and inventions, and i' the figuring and the mechanics. And God helps us with our head-pieces and our hands as well as with our souls ; and if a man does bits o' jobs out o' working hours—builds a oven for's wife to save her from going to the bakehouse, or scrats at his bit o' garden and makes two potatoes grow instead o' one, he's doing more good, and he's just as near to God, as if he was running after some preacher and a-praying and a-groaning."

"Well done, Adam !" said Sandy Jim, who had paused from his planing to shift his planks while Adam was speaking ; "that's the best sarmunt I've heard this long while. By th' same token, my wife's a-bin a-plaguin' me on to build her a oven this twelvemont'."

"There's reason in what thee say'st, Adam," observed Seth, gravely. "But thee know'st thyself as it's hearing the preachers thee find'st so much fault with as has turned many an idle fellow into an industrious un. It's the preacher as empties th' alehouse ; and if a man gets religion he'll do his work none the worse for that."

"On'y he'll lave the panels out o' th' doors sometimes, eh, Seth?" said Wiry Ben.

"Ah, Ben, you've got a joke again me as 'll last you your life. But it isna religion as was i' fault there; it was Seth Bede, as was allays a wool-gathering chap, and religion hasna cured him, the more's the pity."

"Ne'er heed me, Seth," said Wiry Ben, "y'are a down-right good-hearted chap, panels or no panels; an' ye donna set up your bristles at every bit o' fun, like some o' your kin, as is mayhap cliverer."

"Seth, lad," said Adam, taking no notice of the sarcasm against himself, "thee mustna take me unkind. I wasna driving at thee in what I said just now. Some's got one way o' looking at things and some's got another."

"Nay, nay, Addy, thee mean'st me no unkindness," said Seth, "I know that well enough. Thee't like thy dog Gyp—thee bark'st at me sometimes, but thee allays lick'st my hand after."

All hands worked on in silence for some minutes, until the church clock began to strike six. Before the first stroke had died away, Sandy Jim had loosed his plane and was reaching his jacket; Wiry Ben had left a screw half driven in, and thrown his screw-driver into his tool-basket; Mum Taft, who, true to his name, had kept silence throughout the previous conversation, had flung down his hammer as he was in the act of lifting it: and Seth, too, had straightened his back, and was putting out his hand towards his paper cap. Adam alone had gone on with his work as if nothing had happened. But observing the cessation of tools he looked up, and said, in a tone of indignation,

"Look there, now! I can't abide to see men throw away their tools i' that way, the minute the clock begins to strike, as if they took no pleasure i' their work, and was afraid o' doing a stroke too much."

Seth looked a little conscious, and began to be slower in his preparations for going, but Mum Taft broke silence and said,

"Ay, ay, Adam, lad, ye talk like a young un. When y'are six an' forty like me, istid o' six an' twenty, ye wonna be so flush o' workin' for naught."

"Nonsense," said Adam, still wrathful; "what's age got to do with it, I wonder? Ye arena getting stiff yet, I reckon. I hate to see a man's arms drop down as if he was shot, before the clock's fairly struck, just as if he'd never a bit

o' pride and delight in's work. The very grindstone 'ull go on turning a bit after you loose it."

"Bodderation, Adam!" exclaimed Wiry Ben. "Lave a chap aloon, will 'ee. Ye war a-finding faut wi' preachers a while agoo—y' are fond enough o' preachin' yoursen. Ye may like work better nor play, but I like play better nor work; that'll 'commodate ye—it laves ye the moor to do."

With this exit speech, which he considered effective, Wiry Ben shouldered his basket and left the workshop, quickly followed by Mum Taft and Sandy Jim. Seth lingered, and looked wistfully at Adam, as if he expected him to say something.

"Shalt go home before thee go'st to the preaching?" Adam asked, looking up.

"Nay; I've got my hat and things at Will Maskery's. I sha'n't be home before going for ten. I'll happen see Dinah Morris safe home, if she's willing. There's nobody comes with her from Poyser's, thee know'st."

"Then I'll tell mother not to look for thee," said Adam.

"Thee artna going to Poyser's thyself to-night?" said Seth, rather timidly, as he turned to leave the workshop.

"Nay, I'm going to th' school."

Hitherto Gyp had kept his comfortable bed, only lifting up his head and watching Adam more closely as he noticed the other workmen departing. But no sooner did Adam put his ruler in his pocket, and begin to twist his apron round his waist, than Gyp ran forward and looked up in his master's face with patient expectation. If Gyp had had a tail he would doubtless have wagged it; but, being destitute of that vehicle for his emotions, he was, like many other worthy personages, destined to appear more phlegmatic than nature had made him.

"What, art ready for the basket, eh, Gyp?" said Adam, with the same gentle modulation of voice as when he spoke to Seth.

Gyp jumped, and gave a short bark, as much as to say, "Of course." Poor fellow! he had not a great range of expression.

The basket was the one which on work-days held Adam's and Seth's dinner; and no official, walking in procession, could look more resolutely unconscious of all acquaintance than Gyp with his basket trotting at his master's heels.

On leaving the workshop Adam locked the door, took the key out, and carried it to the house on the other side of the

wood-yard. It was a low house, with smooth gray thatch and buff walls, looking pleasant and mellow in the evening light. The leaded windows were bright and speckless, and the door-stone was as clean as a white boulder at ebb tide. On the door-stone stood a clean old woman, in a dark-striped linen gown, a red kerchief, and a linen cap, talking to some speckled fowls which appeared to have been drawn toward her by an illusory expectation of cold potatoes or barley. The old woman's sight seemed to be dim, for she did not recognize Adam till he said,

"Here's the key, Dolly; lay it down for me in the house, will you?"

"Ay, sure; but wunna ye come in, Adam? Miss Mary's i' th' house, and Mester Burge 'ull be back anon; he'd be glad t' ha' ye to supper wi'm, I'll be's warrand."

"No, Dolly, thank you; I'm off home. Good-evening."

Adam hastened with long strides, Gyp close to his heels, out of the work-yard, and along the high road leading away from the village and down the valley. As he reached the foot of the slope, an elderly horseman, with his portmanteau strapped behind him, stopped his horse when Adam had passed him, and turned round to have another long look at the stalwart workman in paper cap, leather breeches, and dark-blue worsted stockings.

Adam, unconscious of the admiration he was exciting, presently struck across the fields, and now broke out into the tune which had all day long been running in his head:

"Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noonday clear;
For God's all-seeing eye surveys
Thy secret thoughts, thy works, and ways."

CHAPTER II.

THE PREACHING.

ABOUT a quarter of seven there was an unusual appearance of excitement in the village of Hayslope, and through the whole length of its little street, from the Donnithorn Arms to the church-yard gate, the inhabitants had evidently been

drawn out of their houses by something more than the pleasure of lounging in the evening sunshine. The Donnithorne Arms stood at the entrance of the village, and a small farmyard and stack-yard which flanked it, indicating that there was a pretty take of land attached to the inn, gave the traveller a promise of good feed for himself and his horse, which might well console him for the ignorance in which the weather-beaten sign left him as to the heraldic bearings of that ancient family, the Donnithornes. Mr. Casson, the landlord, had been for some time standing at the door with his hands in his pockets, balancing himself on his heels and toes, and looking toward a piece of uninclosed ground, with a maple in the middle of it, which he knew to be the destination of certain grave-looking men and women whom he had observed passing at intervals.

Mr. Casson's person was by no means of that common type which can be allowed to pass without description. On a front view it appeared to consist principally of two spheres, bearing about the same relation to each other as the earth and moon : that is to say, the lower sphere might be said, at a rough guess, to be thirteen times larger than the upper, which naturally performed the function of a mere satellite and tributary. But here the resemblance ceased, for Mr. Casson's head was not at all a melancholy looking satellite, nor was it a "spotty globe," as Milton has irreverently called the moon ; on the contrary, no head and face look more sleek and healthy, and its expression, which was chiefly confined to a pair of round and ruddy cheeks, the slight knot and interruptions forming the nose and eyes being scarcely worth mention, was one of jolly contentment, only tempered by that sense of personal dignity which usually made itself felt in his attitude and bearing. This sense of dignity could hardly be considered excessive in a man who had been butler to "the family" for fifteen years, and who, in his present high position, was necessarily very much in contact with his inferiors. How to reconcile his dignity with the satisfaction of his curiosity by walking toward the Green, was the problem that Mr. Casson had been revolving in his mind for the last five minutes ; but when he had partly solved it by taking his hands out of his pockets and thrusting them into the armholes of his waistcoat, by throwing his head on one side, and providing himself with an air of contemptuous indifference to whatever might fall under his notice, his thoughts were diverted by the approach of the horseman, whom we lately saw pausing to

have another look at our friend Adam, and who now pulled up at the door of the Donnithorne Arms.

"Take off the bridle and give him a drink, ostler," said the traveller to the lad in a smock frock, who had come out of the yard at the sound of the horse's hoofs.

"Why, what's up in your pretty village, landlord?" he continued, getting down. "There seems to be quite a stir."

"It's a Methodis' preaching, sir; it's been gev hout as a young woman's a-going to preach on the Green," answered Mr. Casson, in a treble and wheezy voice, with a slightly mincing accent. "Will you please to step in, sir, an' tek somethink?"

"No; I must be getting on to Drosseter. I only want a drink for my horse. And what does your parson say, I wonder, to a young woman preaching just under his nose?"

"Parson Irwine, sir, doesn't live here; he lives at Brox'on, over the hill there. The parsonage here's a tumble-down place, sir, not fit for gentry to live in. He comes here to preach of a Sunday afternoon, sir, an' puts up his hoss here. It's a gray cob, sir, an' he sets great store by't. He's allays puts up his hoss here, sir, iver since before I hed the Donnithorne Arms. I'm not this countryman, you may tell by my tongue, sir. They're cur'ous talkers i' this country, sir; the gentry's hard work to hunderstand 'em. I was brought hup among the gentry, sir, an' got the turn o' their tongue when I was a bye. Why, what do you think the folks here say for 'hevn't you?'—the gentry, you know, says 'hevn't you'—well, the people about here says 'hanna yey.' It's what they call the dileck as is spoke hereabout, sir. That's what I've heard Squire Donnithorne say many a time; it's the dileck, says he."

"Ay, ay," said the stranger, smiling. "I know it very well. But you've not got many Methodists about here, surely—in this agricultural spot. I should have thought there would hardly be such a thing as a Methodist to be found about here. You're all farmers, aren't you? The Methodists can seldom lay much hold on *them*."

"Why, sir, there's a pretty lot o' workmen round about, sir. There's Mester Burge as owns the timber-yard over there, he underteks a good bit o' building an' repairs. An' there's the stone-pits not far off. There's plenty of emply i' this country side, sir. An' there's a fine batch o' Methodisses at Treddles'on—that's the market-town, about three miles off—you'll maybe ha' come through it, sir. There's pretty

nigh a score of 'em on the Green now, as come from there. That's where our people gets it from, though there's only two men of 'em in all Hayslope: that's Will Maskery, the wheelwright, and Seth Bede, a young man as works at the carpenterin'."

"The preacher comes from Treddleston, then, does she?"

"Nay, sir, she comes out o' Stonyshire, pretty nigh thirty mile off. But she's a-visitin' hereabout at Mester Poyser's at the Hall Farm—it's them barns an' big walnut-trees, right away to the left, sir. She's own niece to Poyser's wife, an' they'll be fine an' vexed at her for making a fool of herself i' that way. But I've heared as there's no holding these Methodisses when the maggit's once got i' their head; many of 'em goes stark starin' mad wi' their religion. Though this young woman's quiet enough to look at, by what I can make out; I've not seen her myself."

"Well, I wish I had time to wait and see her, but I must get on. I've been out of my way for the last twenty minutes, to have a look at that place in the valley. It's Squire Donnithorne's, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, that's Donnithorne Chase, that is. Fine hoaks there, isn't there, sir? I should know what it is, sir, for I've lived butler there a-going i' fifteen year. It's Captain Donnithorne as is th' heir, sir—Squire Donnithorne's grandson. He'll be comin' of hage this 'ay-'arvest, sir, an' we shall hev fine doin's. He owns all the land about here, sir, Squire Donnithorne does."

"Well, it's a pretty spot, whoever may own it," said the traveller, mounting his horse; "and one meets some fine strapping fellows about too. I met as fine a young fellow as ever I saw in my life, about half an hour ago, before I came up the hill—a carpenter, a tall, broad-shouldered fellow with black hair and black eyes, marching along like a soldier. We want such fellows as he to lick the French."

"Ay, sir, that's Adam Bede, that is, I'll be bound—Thias Bede's son—everybody knows him hereabout. He's an uncommon clever stiddy fellow, an' wonderful strong. Lord bless you, sir—if you'll hexcuse me for saying so—he can walk forty mile a day, an' lift a matter o' sixty ston'. He's an uncommon favorite wi' the gentry, sir; Captain Donnithorne and Parson Irwine meks a fine fuss wi' him. But he's a little lifted up an' peppery like."

"Well, good-evening to you, landlord; I must go on."

"Your servant, sir; good-evenin'."

The traveller put his horse into a quick walk up the village, but when he approached the Green, the beauty of the view that lay on his right hand, the singular contrast presented by the groups of villagers with the knot of Methodists near the maple, and, perhaps yet more, curiosity to see the young female preacher, proved too much for his anxiety to get to the end of his journey, and he paused.

The Green lay at the extremity of the village, and from it the road branched off in two directions, one leading farther up the hill by the church, and the other winding gently down toward the valley. On the side of the Green that led toward the church the broken line of thatched cottages was continued nearly to the church-yard gate; but on the opposite, north-western side, there was nothing to obstruct the view of gently-swelling meadow, and wooded valley, and dark masses of distant hill. That rich undulating district of Loamshire to which Hayslope belonged lies close to a grim outskirts of Stonyshire, overlooked by its barren hills, as a pretty blooming sister may sometimes be seen linked in the arm of a rugged, tall, swarthy brother; and in two or three hours' ride the traveller might exchange a bleak, treeless region, intersected by lines of cold gray stone, for one where his road wound under the shelter of woods, or upswelling hills, muffled with hedgerows and long meadow-grass and thick corn; and where at every turn he came upon some fine old country-seat nestled in the valley or crowning the slope, some homestead with its long length of barn and its cluster of golden ricks, some gray steeple looking out from a pretty confusion of trees and thatch and dark-red tiles. It was just such a picture as this last that Hayslope church had made to the traveller as he began to mount the gentle slope leading to its pleasant uplands, and now from his station near the Green he had before him in one view nearly all the other typical features of this pleasant land. High up against the horizon were the huge conical masses of hill, like giant mounds intended to fortify this region of corn and grass against the keen and hungry winds of the north; not distant enough to be clothed in purple mystery, but with sombre greenish sides visibly specked with sheep, whose motion was only revealed by memory, not detected by sight; wooed from day to day by the changing hours, but responding with no change in themselves—left forever grim and sullen after the flush of morning, the winged gleams of the April noonday, the parting crimson glory of the ripening summer sun. And directly

below them the eye rested on a more advanced line of hanging woods, divided by bright patches of pasture or furrowed crops, and not yet deepened into the uniform leafy curtain of high summer, but still showing the warm tints of the young oak and the tender green of the ash and lime. Then came the valley, where the woods grew thicker, as if they had rolled down and hurried together from the patches left smooth on the slope, that they might take the better care of the tall mansion which lifted its parapets and sent its faint blue summer smoke among them. Doubtless there was a large sweep of park and a broad, glassy pool in front of that mansion, but the swelling slope of meadow would not let our traveller see them from the village green. He saw, instead, a foreground which was just as lovely—the level sunlight lying like transparent gold among the gently-curving stems of the feathered grass and the tall red sorrel, and the white umbels of the hemlocks lining the bushy hedgerows. It was that moment in summer when the sound of the scythe being whetted makes us cast more lingering looks at the flower-sprinkled tresses of the meadows.

He might have seen other beauties in the landscape if he had turned a little in his saddle and looked eastward, beyond Jonathan Burge's pasture and wood-yard toward the green corn-fields and walnut-trees of the Hall Farm; but apparently there was more interest for him in the living groups close at hand. Every generation in the village was there, from "old Feyther Taft" in his brown worsted night-cap, who was bent nearly double, but seemed tough enough to keep on his legs a long while, leaning on his short stick, down to the babies with their little round heads lolling forward in quilted linen caps. Now and then there was a new arrival; perhaps a slouching laborer, who, having eaten his supper, came out to look at the unusual scene with a slow bovine gaze, willing to hear what any one had to say in explanation of it, but by no means excited enough to ask a question. But all took care not to join the Methodists on the Green, and identify themselves in that way with the expectant audience, for there was not one of them that would not have disclaimed the imputation of having come out to hear the "preacher-woman"—they had only come out to see "what war a-goin' on, like." The men were chiefly gathered in the neighborhood of the blacksmith's shop. But do not imagine them gathered in a knot. Villagers never swarm; a whisper is unknown among them, and they seem almost as

incapable of an undertone as a cow or a stag. Your true rustic turns his back on his interlocutor, throwing a question over his shoulder as if he meant to run away from the answer, and walking a step or two farther off when the interest of the dialogue culminates. So the group in the vicinity of the blacksmith's door was by no means a close one, and formed no screen in front of Chad Cranage, the blacksmith, himself, who stood with his black brawny arms folded, leaning against the door-post, and occasionally sending forth a bellowing laugh at his own jokes, giving them a marked preference over the sarcasms of Wiry Ben, who had renounced the pleasures of the Holly Bush for the sake of seeing life under a new form. But both styles of wit were treated with equal contempt by Mr. Joshua Rann. Mr. Rann's leathern apron and subdued griminess can leave no one in any doubt that he is the village shoemaker; the thrusting out of his chin and stomach, and the twirling of his thumbs, are more subtle indications, intended to prepare unwary strangers for the discovery that they are in the presence of the parish clerk. "Old Joshway," as he is irreverently called by his neighbors, is in a state of simmering indignation; but he has not yet opened his lips except to say, in a resounding bass undertone, like the tuning of a violoncello, "Sehon, King of the Amorites: for His mercy endureth forever; and Og, the King of Basan: for His mercy endureth forever"—a quotation which may seem to have slight bearing on the present occasion, but, as with every other anomaly, adequate knowledge will show it to be a natural sequence. Mr. Rann was inwardly maintaining the dignity of the Church in the face of this scandalous irruption of Methodism; and, as that dignity was bound up with his own sonorous utterance of the responses, his argument naturally suggested a quotation from the psalm he had read the last Sunday afternoon.

The stronger curiosity of the women had drawn them quite to the edge of the Green, where they could examine more closely the Quaker-like costume and odd deportment of the female Methodists. Underneath the maple there was a small cart which had been brought from the wheelwright's to serve as a pulpit, and round this a couple of benches and a few chairs had been placed. Some of the Methodists were resting on these, with their eyes closed, as if rapt in prayer or meditation. Others chose to continue standing with a look of melancholy compassion, which was highly amusing to Bessy Cranage, the blacksmith's buxom daughter, known to her

neighbors as Chad's Bess, who wondered "why the folks war a-mekin faces a that'ns." Chad's Bess was the object of peculiar compassion, because her hair, being turned back under a cap which was set at the top of her head, exposed to view an ornament of which she was much prouder than of her red cheeks, namely, a pair of large round earrings with false garnets in them, ornaments contemned not only by the Methodists' but by her own cousin and namesake, Timothy's Bess, who with much cousinly feeling, often wished "them earrings" might come to good.

Timothy's Bess, though retaining her maiden appellation among her familiars, had long been the wife of Sandy Jim, and possessed a handsome set of matronly jewels, of which it is enough to mention the heavy baby she was rocking in her arms, and the sturdy fellow of five in knee-breeches and red legs, who had a rusty milk-can round his neck by way of drum, and was very carefully avoided by Chad's small terrier. This young olive-branch, notorious under the name of Timothy's Bess's Ben, being of an inquiring disposition, unchecked by any false modesty, had advanced beyond the group of women and children, and was walking round the Methodists, looking up in their faces with his mouth wide open, and beating his stick against the milk-can by way of musical accompaniment. But one of the elderly women bending down to take him by the shoulder, with an air of grave remonstrance, Timothy's Bess's Ben first kicked out vigorously, then took to his heels, and sought refuge behind his father's legs.

"Ye gallows young dog," said Sandy Jim, with some paternal pride, "if ye dunna keep that stick quiet, I'll tek it from ye. What d'ye mane by kickin' foulks?"

"Here! gie'm here to me, Jim," said Chad Cranage; "I'll tie 'm up an' shoe 'm as I do the hosses. Well, Mester Casson," he continued, as that personage sauntered up toward the group of men, "how are ye t'-naight? Are ye coom t' help groon? The' say folks allays groon when they're harkenin' to the Methodys, as if the' war bad i' th' inside. I mane to groon as loud as your cow did th' other naight, an' then the praicher 'ull think I'm i' th' raight way."

"I'd advise you not to be up to no nonsense, Chad," said Mr. Casson, with some dignity; "Poyser wouldn't like to hear as his wife's niece was treated any ways disrespectful, for all he mayn't be fond of her taking on herself to preach."

"Ay, an' she's a pleasant-looking 'un too," said Wiry Ben. "I'll stick up for the pretty women preachin'; I know they'd

persuade me over a deal sooner nor th' ugly men. I shouldna wonder if I turn Methody afore the night's out, an' begin to coort the preacher like Seth Bede."

"Why, Seth's lookin' rether too high, I should think," said Mr. Casson. "This woman's kin wouldn't like her to demean herself to a common carpenter!"

"Tchu!" said Ben, with a long treble intonation, "what's folks's kin got to do wi't? Not a chip. Poyser's wife may turn her nose up an' forget by-gones, but this Dina Morris, the' tell me, 's as poor as iver she was—works at a mill, an's much ado to keep hersen. A strappin' young carpenter as is a ready-made Methody, like Seth, wouldna be a bad match for her. Why, Poyser's make as big a fuss wi' Adam Bede as if he war a nevvie o' their own."

"Idle talk! idle talk!" said Mr. Joshua Rann. "Adam an' Seth's two men; you wunna fit them two wi' the same last."

"Maybe," said Wiry Ben, contemptuously, "but Seth's the lad for me, though he war a Methody twice o'er. I'm fair beat wi' Seth, for I've been teazin' him iver sin' we've been workin' together, an' he bears me no more malice nor a lamb. An' he's a stout-hearted feller too, for when we saw the old tree all afire, a-comin' across the fields one night, an' we thought as it were a boguy, Seth made no more ado, but he up to't as bold as a constable. Why, there he comes out o' Will Maskery's; there's Will hisself, lookin' as meek as if he couldna knock a nail o' th' head for fear o' hurtin' 't. An' there's the pretty preacher-woman! My eye, she's got her bonnet off. I mun go a bit nearer."

Several of the men followed Ben's lead, and the traveller pushed his horse on to the Green, as Dinah walked rather quickly, and in advance of her companions, toward the cart under the maple-tree. While she was near Seth's tall figure she looked short, but when she had mounted the cart, and was away from all comparison, she seemed above the middle height of woman, though in reality she did not exceed it—an effect which was due to the slimness of her figure, and the simple line of her black stuff dress. The stranger was struck with surprise as he saw her approach and mount the cart—surprise, not so much at the feminine delicacy of her appearance, as at the total absence of self-consciousness in her demeanor. He had made up his mind to see her advance with a measured step, and a demure solemnity of countenance; he had felt sure that her face would be mantled with a smile

of conscious saintship, or else charged with denunciatory bitterness. He knew but two types of Methodist—the ecstatic and the bilious. But Dinah walked as simply as if she were going to market, and seemed as unconscious of her outward appearance as a little boy; there was no blush, no tremulousness, which said, “I know you think me a pretty woman, too young to preach;” no casting up or down of the eyelids, no compression of the lips, no attitude of the arms, that said, “But you must think of me as a saint.” She held no book in her ungloved hands, but let them hang down lightly crossed before her, as she stood and turned her gray eyes on the people. There was no keenness in the eyes; they seemed rather to be shedding love than making observations; they had the liquid look that tells that the mind is full of what it has to give out, rather than impressed by external objects. She stood with her left hand toward the descending sun; and leafy boughs screened her from its rays; but in this sober light the delicate coloring of her face seemed to gather a calm vividness, like flowers at evening. It was a small oval face, of a uniform transparent whiteness, with an egg-like line of cheek and chin, a full but firm mouth, a delicate nostril, and a low perpendicular brow, surmounted by a rising arch of parting, between smooth locks of pale reddish hair. The hair was drawn straight back behind the ears, and covered, except for an inch or two above the brow, by a net Quaker cap. The eyebrows, of the same color as the hair, were perfectly horizontal and firmly penciled; the eyelashes, though no darker, were long and abundant; nothing was left blurred or unfinished. It was one of those faces that make one think of white flowers with light touches of color on their pure petals. The eyes had no peculiar beauty beyond that of expression; they looked so simple, so candid, so gravely loving, that no accusing scowl, no light sneer, could help melting away before their glance. Joshua Rann gave a long cough, as if he were clearing his throat in order to come to a new understanding with himself; Chad Cranage lifted up his leather skull-cap and scratched his head; and Wiry Ben wondered how Seth had the pluck to think of courting her.

“A sweet woman,” the stranger said to himself, “but surely Nature never meant her for a preacher.”

Perhaps he was one of those who think that Nature has theatrical properties, and, with the considerate view of facilitating art and psychology, “makes up” her characters, so that there may be no mistake about them. But Dinah began to speak.

"Dear friends," she said, in a clear but not loud voice, "let us pray for a blessing."

She closed her eyes, and, hanging her head down a little, continued in the same moderate tone, as if speaking to some one quite near her :

"Saviour of sinners ! when a poor woman, laden with sins, went out to the well to draw water, she found Thee sitting at the well. She knew Thee not ; she had not sought Thee ; her mind was dark ; her life was unholy. But Thou didst speak to her, Thou didst teach her, Thou didst show her that her life lay open before Thee, and yet Thou wast ready to give her that blessing which she had never sought. Jesus ! Thou art in the midst of us, and Thou knowest all men : if there is any here like that poor woman—if their minds are dark, their lives unholy, if they have come out not seeking Thee, not desiring to be taught, deal with them according to the free mercy which Thou didst show to her. Speak to them, Lord ; open their ears to my message ; bring their sins to their minds, and make them thirst for that salvation which Thou art ready to give.

"Lord ! Thou art with Thy people still : they see Thee in the night watches, and their hearts burn within them as Thou talkest with them by the way. And Thou art near to those who have not known Thee : open their eyes that they may see Thee—see Thee weeping over them, and saying, 'Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life—see Thee hanging on the cross and saying, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'—see Thee as Thou wilt come again in Thy glory to judge them at the last. Amen."

Dinah opened her eyes again and paused, looking at the group of villagers, who were now gathered rather more closely on her right hand.

"Dear friends," she began, raising her voice a little, "you have all of you been to church, and I think you must have heard the clergyman read these words : 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.' Jesus Christ spoke those words—he said he came *to preach the Gospel to the poor* : I don't know whether you ever thought about those words much ; but I will tell you when I remember first hearing them. It was on just such a sort of evening as this, when I was a little girl, and my aunt, as brought me up, took me to hear a good man preach out of doors, just as we are here. I remember his face well : he was a very old man, and had very long white hair ; his voice was very soft and beautiful, not like any voice I had

ever heard before. I was a little girl, and scarcely knew anything, and this old man seemed to me such a different sort of a man from any body I had ever seen before, that I thought he had perhaps come down from the sky to preach to us, and I said, 'Aunt, will he go back to the sky to-night, like the picture in the Bible?'

"That man of God was Mr. Wesley, who spent his life in doing what our blessed Lord did—preaching the Gospel to the poor—and he entered into his rest eight years ago. I came to know more about him years after, but I was a foolish, thoughtless child then, and I remembered only one thing he told us in his sermon. He told us as 'Gospel' meant 'good news.' The Gospel, you know, is what the Bible tells us about God.

"Think of that, now! Jesus Christ did really come down from heaven, as I, like a silly child, thought Mr. Wesley did; and what he came down for, was to tell good news about God to the poor. Why, you and me, dear friends, are poor. We have been brought up in poor cottages, and have been reared on oat-cake and lived coarse; and we haven't been to school much, nor read books, and we don't know much about anything but what happens just round us. We are just the sort of people that want to hear good news. For when any body's well off, they don't much mind about hearing news from distant parts; but if a poor man or woman's in trouble, and has hard work to make out a living, he likes to have a letter to tell him he's got a friend as will help him: To be sure we can't help knowing something about God, even if we've never heard the Gospel, the good news that our Saviour brought us. For we know everything comes from God: don't you, say almost every day, 'This and that will happen, please God?' and 'We shall begin to cut the grass soon, please God to send us a little more sunshine?' We know very well we are altogether in the hands of God: we didn't bring ourselves into the world, we can't keep ourselves alive while we're sleeping; the daylight, and the wind, and the corn, and the cows to give us milk—everything we have comes from God. And he gave us our souls, and put love between parents and children, and husband and wife. But is that as much as we want to know about God? We see he is great and mighty, and can do what he will; we are lost as if we were struggling in great waters, when we try to think of him.

"But perhaps doubts come into your mind like this: Can God take much notice of us poor people? Perhaps he only

made the world for the great, and the wise, and the rich. It doesn't cost him much to give us our little handful of victual and bit of clothing ; but how do we know he cares for us any more than we care for the worms and things in the garden, so as we rear our carrots and onions ? Will God take care of us when we die ? and has he any comfort for us when we are lame, and sick, and helpless ? Perhaps, too, he is angry with us ; else why does the blight come, and the bad harvest, and the fever, and all sorts of pain and trouble ? For our life is full of trouble, and if God sends us good, he seems to send bad too. How is it ? how is it ?

" Ah ! dear friends, we are in sad want of good news about God ; and what does other good news signify if we haven't that ? For everything else comes to an end, and when we die we leave it all. But God lasts when everything else is gone. What shall we do if he is not our friend ? "

Then Dinah told how the good news had been brought, and how the mind of God towards the poor had been made manifest in the life of Jesus, dwelling on its lowliness and its acts of mercy.

" So you see, dear friends," she went on, " Jesus spent his time almost all in doing good to poor people ; he preached out of doors to them, and he made friends of poor workmen, and taught them and took pains with them. Not but what he did good to the rich too, for he was full of love to all men, only he saw as the poor were more in want of his help. So he cured the lame, and the sick, and the blind, and he worked miracles to feed the hungry, because, he said, he was sorry for them ; and he was very kind to the little children, and comforted those who had lost their friends ; and he spoke very tenderly to poor sinners that were sorry for their sins.

" Ah ! wouldn't you love such a man if you saw him—if he was here in this village ? What a kind heart he must have ! What a friend he would be to go to in trouble ! How pleasant it must be to be taught by him !

" Well, dear friends, who *was* this man ? Was he only a good man—a very good man, and no more—like our dear Mr. Wesley, who has been taken from us ? . . . He was the Son of God—'in the image of the Father,' the Bible says ; that means, just like God, who is the beginning and end of all things—the God we want to know about. So then, all the love that Jesus showed to the poor is the same love that God has for us. We can understand what Jesus felt, because he came in a body like ours, and spoke words such as we speak

to each other. We were afraid to think what God was before—the God who made the world, and the sky, and the thunder and lightning. We could never see him; we could only see the things he had made; and some of these things was very terrible, so as we might well tremble when we thought of him. But our blessed Saviour has showed us what God is in a way us poor ignorant people can understand; he has showed us what God's heart is, what are his feelings toward us.

“But let us see a little more about what Jesus came on earth for. Another time he said, ‘I came to seek and to save that which was lost;’ and another time, ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’

“The *lost!* . . . *Sinners!* . . . Ah! dear friends, does that mean you and me?”

Hitherto the traveller had been chained to the spot against his will by the charin of Dinah's mellow treble tones, which had a variety of modulation like that of a fine instrument touched with the unconscious skill of musical instinct. The simple things she said seemed like novelties, as a melody strikes us with a new feeling when we hear it sung by the pure voice of a boyish chorister; the quiet depth of conviction with which she spoke seemed in itself an evidence for the truth of her message. He saw that she had thoroughly arrested her hearers. The villagers had pressed nearer to her, and there was no longer anything but grave attention on all faces. She spoke slowly, though quite fluently, often pausing after a question, or before any transition of ideas. There was no change of attitude, no gesture; the effect of her speech was produced entirely by the inflections of her voice; and when she came to the question, “Will God take care of us when we die?” she uttered it in such a tone of plaintive appeal that the tears came into some of the hardest eyes. The stranger had ceased to doubt, as he had done at the first glance, that she could fix the attention of her rougher hearers, but still he wondered whether she could have that power of rousing their more violent emotions, which must surely be a necessary seal of her vocation as a Methodist preacher, until she came to the words, “Lost! Sinners!” when there was a great change in her voice and manner. She had made a long pause before the exclamation, and the pause seemed to be filled by agitating thoughts that showed themselves in her features. Her pale face became paler; the circles under her eyes deepened, as they do when tears half gather without falling; and the mild, loving eyes took an expression of appalled

pity, as if she had suddenly discerned a destroying angel hovering over the heads of the people. Her voice became deep and muffled, but there was still no gesture. Nothing could be less like the ordinary type of the ranter than Dinah. She was not preaching as she heard others preach, but speaking directly from her own emotions, and under the inspiration of her own simple faith.

But now she had entered into a new current of feeling. Her manner became less calm, her utterance more rapid and agitated, as she tried to bring home to the people their guilt, their wilful darkness, their state of disobedience to God—as she dwelt on the hatefulness of sin, the Divine holiness, and the sufferings of the Saviour by which a way had been opened for their salvation. At last it seemed as if, in her yearning desire to reclaim the lost sheep, she could not be satisfied by addressing her hearers as a body. She appealed first to one and then to another, beseeching them with tears to turn to God while there was yet time; painting to them the desolation of their souls, lost in sin, feeding on the husks of this miserable world, far away from God their Father; and then the love of the Saviour, who was waiting and watching for their return.

There was many a responsive sigh and groan from her fellow-Methodists, but the village mind does not easily take fire, and a little smouldering, vague anxiety, that might easily die out again, was the utmost effect Dinah's preaching had wrought in them at present. Yet no one had retired, except the children and "old Feyther Taft," who, being too deaf to catch many words, had some time ago gone back to his ingle-nook. Wiry Ben was feeling very uncomfortable, and almost wishing he had not come to hear Dinah; he thought what she said would haunt him somehow. Yet he couldn't help liking to look at her and listen to her, though he dreaded every moment that she would fix her eyes on him, and address him in particular. She had already addressed Sandy Jim, who was now holding the baby to relieve his wife, and the big soft-hearted man had rubbed away some tears with his fist, with a confused intention of being a better fellow, going less to the Holly Bush down by the Stone Pits, and cleaning himself more regularly of a Sunday.

In front of Sandy Jim stood Chad's Bess, who had shown an unwonted quietude and fixity of attention ever since Dinah had begun to speak. Not that the matter of the discourse had arrested her at once, for she was lost in a puzzling speculation

as to what pleasure and satisfaction there could be in life to a young woman who wore a cap like Dinah's. Giving up this inquiry in despair, she took to studying Dinah's nose, eyes, mouth, and hair, and wondering whether it was better to have such a sort of pale face as that, or fat red cheeks and round black eyes like her own. But gradually the influence of the general gravity told upon her, and she became conscious of what Dinah was saying. The gentle tones, the loving persuasion, did not touch her, but when the more severe appeals came she began to be frightened. Poor Bessy had always been considered a naughty girl; she was conscious of it; if it was necessary to be very good, it was clear she must be in a bad way. She couldn't find her places at church as Sally Rann could, she had often been tittering when she "curcheyed" to Mr. Irwine, and these religious deficiencies were accompanied by a corresponding slackness in the minor morals, for Bessy belonged unquestionably to that unsoaped, lazy class of feminine characters with whom you may venture to eat "an egg, an apple, or a nut." All this she was generally conscious of, and hitherto had not been greatly ashamed of it. But now she began to feel very much as if the constable had come to take her up and carry her before the justice for some undefined offence. She had a terrified sense that God, whom she had always thought of as very far off, was very near to her, and that Jesus was close by looking at her, though she could not see him. For Dinah had that belief in visible manifestations of Jesus, which is common among the Methodists, and she communicated it irresistibly to her hearers; she made them feel that he was among them bodily, and might at any moment show himself to them in some way that would strike anguish and penitence into their hearts.

"See!" she exclaimed, turning to the left, with her eyes fixed on a point above the heads of the people, "see where our blessed Lord stands and weeps, and stretches out his arms toward you. Hear what he says: 'How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' . . . and ye would not!" she repeated, in a tone of pleading reproach, turning her eyes on the people again. "See the print of the nails on his dear hands and feet. It is your sins that made them! Ah! how pale and worn he looks! He has gone through all that great agony in the garden, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death and the great drops of sweat fell like blood to the ground. They spat upon him and buffeted him, they scourged him, they

mocked him, they laid the heavy cross on his bruised shoulders. Then they nailed him up! Ah! what pain! His lips are parched with thirst, and they mocked him still in his great agony; yet with those parched lips he prays for them, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Then a horror of great darkness fell upon him, and he felt what sinners feel when they are forever shut out from God. That was the last drop in the cup of bitterness. 'My God, my God!' he cries, 'why hast Thou forsaken me?'

"All this he bore for you! For you—and you never think of him; for you—and you turn your backs on him; you don't care what he has gone through for you. Yet he is not weary of toiling for you; he has risen from the dead, he is praying for you at the right hand of God—'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And he is upon this earth too; he is among us; he is there close to you now; I see his wounded body and his look of love."

Here Dinah turned to Bessy Cranage, whose bonny youth and evident vanity had touched her with pity.

"Poor child! poor child! He is beseeching you, and you don't listen to him. You think of earrings, and fine gowns and caps, and you never think of the Saviour who died to save your precious soul. Your cheeks will be shrivelled one day, your hair will be gray, your poor body will be thin and tottering! Then you will begin to feel that your soul is not saved; then you will have to stand before God dressed in your sins, in your evil tempers and vain thoughts. And Jesus, who stands ready to help you now, won't help you then; because you won't have him to be your Saviour, he will be your judge. Now he looks at you with love and mercy, and says, 'Come to me that you may have life;' then he will turn away from you and say, 'Depart from me into everlasting fire!'"

Poor Bessy's wide-open black eyes began to fill with tears, her great red cheeks and lips became quite pale, and her face was distorted like a little child's before a burst of crying.

"Ah! poor blind child!" Dinah went on, "think if it should happen to you as it once happened to a servant of God in the days of her vanity. *She* thought of her lace caps, and saved all her money to buy 'em; she thought nothing about how she might get a clean heart and a right spirit, she only wanted to have better lace than other girls. And one day when she put her new cap on and looked in the glass, she saw a bleeding Face crowned with thorns. That face is looking at you now,"—here Dinah pointed to a spot close in front of

Bessy—"Ah! tear off those follies! cast them away from you, as if they were stinging adders. They *are* stinging you—they are poisoning your soul—they are dragging you down into a dark bottomless pit, where you will sink forever, and forever, and forever, further away from light and God."

Bessy could bear it no longer; a great terror was upon her, and, wrenching her earrings from her ears, she threw them down before her, sobbing aloud. Her father, Chad, frightened lest he should be "laid hold on" too, this impression on the rebellious Bess striking him as nothing less than a miracle, walked hastily away and began to work at his anvil by way of reassuring himself. "Folks mun ha' hoss-shoes, praichin or no praichin i the devil canna lay hould o' me for that," he muttered to himself.

But now Dinch began to tell of the joys that were in store for the penitent, and to describe in her simple way the divine peace and love with which the soul of the believer is filled—how the sense of God's love turns poverty into riches, and satisfies the soul, so that no uneasy desire vexes it, no fear alarms it; how, at last, the very temptation to sin is extinguished, and heaven is begun upon earth, because no cloud passes between the soul and God, who is its eternal sun.

"Dear friends," she said at last, "brothers and sisters, whom I love as those for whom my Lord has died, believe me I know what this great blessedness is; and because I know it, I want you to have it too. I am poor, like you; I have to get my living with my hands; but no lord nor lady can be so happy as me, if they haven't got the love of God in their souls. Think what it is—not to hate anything but sin; to be full of love to every creature; to be frightened at nothing; to be sure that all things will turn to good; not to mind pain, because it is our Father's will; to know that nothing—no, not if the earth was to be burnt up, or the waters come and drown us—nothing could part us from God who loves us, and who fills our souls with peace and joy, because we are sure that whatever he wills is holy, just, and good.

"Dear friends, come and take this blessedness; it is offered to you; it is the good news that Jesus came to preach to the poor. It is not like the riches of this world, so that the more one gets the less the rest can have. God is without end; his love is without end—

"Its streams the whole creation reach,
So plenteous is the store;
Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough for evermore."

Dinah had been speaking at least an hour, and the reddening light of the parting day seemed to give a solemn emphasis to her closing words. The stranger, who had been interested in the course of her sermon, as if it had been the development of a drama—for there is this sort of fascination in all sincere unpremeditated eloquence, which opens to one the inward drama of the speaker's emotions—now turned his horse aside and pursued his way, while Dinah said, "Let us sing a little, dear friends;" and as he was still winding down the slope, the voices of the Methodists reached him, rising and falling in that strange blending of exultation and sadness which belongs to the cadence of a hymn.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER THE PREACHING.

IN less than an hour from that time Seth Bede was walking by Dinah's side along the hedgerow-path that skirted the pastures and green cornfields which lay between the village and the Hall Farm. Dinah had taken off her little Quaker bonnet again, and was holding it in her hands that she might have a freer enjoyment of the cool evening twilight, and Seth could see the expression of her face quite clearly as he walked by her side, timidly revolving something he wanted to say to her. It was an expression of unconscious placid gravity—of absorption in thoughts that had no connection with the present moment or with her own personality: an expression that is most of all discouraging to a lover. Her very walk was discouraging: it had that quiet elasticity that asks for no support. Seth felt this dimly; he said to himself, "She's too good and holy for any man, let alone me," and the words he had been summoning rushed back again before they had reached his lips. But another thought gave him courage: "There's no man could love her better, and leave her freer to follow the Lord's work." They had been silent for many minutes now, since they had done talking about Bessy Cranage; Dinah seemed almost to have forgotten Seth's presence, and her pace was becoming so much quicker, that the sense of their being only a few minutes' walk from the yard-gates of the Hall Farm at last gave Seth courage to speak.

You've quite made up your mind to go back to Snow-field o' Saturday, Dinah?"

"Yes," said Dinah quietly. "I'm called there. It was borne in upon my mind while I was meditating on Sunday night, as sister Allen, who's in a decline, is in need of me. I saw her as plain as we see that bit of thin white cloud, lifting up her poor thin hand and beckoning to me. And this morning when I opened the Bible for direction, the first words my eyes fell on were, 'And after we had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia.' If it wasn't for that clear showing of the Lord's will I should be loth to go, for my heart yearns over my aunt and her little ones, and that poor wandering lamb, Hetty Sorrel. I've been much drawn out in prayer for her of late, and I look on it as a token that there may be mercy in store for her."

"God grant it," said Seth. "For I doubt Adam's heart is so set on her, he'll never turn to any body else; and yet it 'ud go to my heart if he was to marry her, for I canna think as she'd make him happy. It's a deep mystery—the way the heart of man turns to one woman out of all the rest he's seen i' the world, and makes it easier for him to work seven year for *her*, like Jacob did for Rachel, sooner than have any other woman for th' asking. I often think of them words, 'And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed to him but a few days for the love he had to her.' I know those words 'ud come true with me, Dinah, if so be you'd give me hope as I might win you after seven years was over. I know you think a husband 'ud be taking up too much o' your thoughts, because St. Paul says, 'She that's married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband; ' and may happen you'll think me over-bold to speak to you about it again, after what you told me o' your mind last Saturday. But I've been thinking it over again by night and by day, and I've prayed not to be blinded by my own desires to think what's only good for me must be good for you too. And it seems to me there's more texts for your marrying than ever you can find against it. For St. Paul says as plain as can be, in another place, 'I will that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully; ' and then, 'two are better than one; ' and that holds good with marriage as well as with other things. For we should be o' one heart and o' one mind, Dinah. We both serve the same Master, and are striving after the same gifts; and I'd never be the

husband to make a claim on you as could interfere with your doing the work God has fitted you for. I'd make a shift, and fend indoor and out, to give you more liberty—more than you have now, and I'm strong enough to work for us both."

When Seth had once begun to urge his suit, he went on earnestly, and almost hurriedly, lest Dinah should speak some decisive word before he had poured forth all the arguments he had prepared. His cheeks became flushed as he went on, his mild gray eyes filled with tears, and his voice trembled as he spoke the last sentence. They had reached one of those very narrow passes between two tall stones, which performed the office of a stile in Loamshire, and Dinah paused as she turned toward Seth, and said, in her tender but calm treble notes,

"Seth Bede, I thank you for your love toward me, and if I could think any man as more than a Christian brother, I think it would be you. But my heart is not free to marry. That is good for other women, and it is a great and a blessed thing to be a wife and mother; but 'as God had distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every man, so let him walk.' God has called me to minister to others, not to have any joys or sorrows of my own, but to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with those that weep. He has called me to speak his word, and he has greatly owned my work. It could only be on a very clear showing that I could leave the brethren and sisters at Snowfield, who are favored with very little of this world's good; where the trees are few so that a child might count them, and there's very hard living for the poor in the winter. It has been given to me to help to comfort and strengthen the little flock there, and to call in many wanderers; and my soul is filled with these things from my rising up till my lying down. My life is too short, and God's work is too great for me to think of making a home for myself in this world. I've not turned a deaf ear to your words, Seth, for when I saw as your love was given to me, I thought it might be a leading of Providence for me to change my way of life, and that we should be fellow-helpers; and I spread the matter before the Lord. But whenever I tried to fix my mind on marriage, and our living together, other thoughts always came in—the times when I've prayed by the sick and dying, and the happy hours I've had preaching, when my heart was filled with love, and the Word was given to me abundantly. And when I've opened the Bible for direction, I've always lighted on some clear word to tell me where my work lay. I believe what you say, Seth, that you would try to be a help and not a

hindrance to my work ; but I see that our marriage is not God's will—he draws my heart another way. I desire to live and die without husband or children. I seem to have no room in my soul for wants and fears of my own, it has pleased God to fill my heart so full with the wants and sufferings of his poor people."

Seth was unable to reply, and they walked on in silence. At last, as they were nearly at the yard-gate, he said :

"Well, Dinah, I must seek for strength to bear it, and to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. But I feel now how weak my faith is. It seems as if, when you are gone, I could never joy in anything any more. I think it's something passing the love of women as I feel for you, for I could be content without your marrying me if I could go and live at Snowfield, and be near you. I trusted as the strong love God had given me toward you was a leading for us both ; but it seems it was only meant for my trial. Perhaps I feel more for you than I ought to feel for any creature, for I often can't help saying of you what the hymn says :

" ' In darkest shades if she appear,
My dawning is begun ;
She is my soul's bright morning-star,
And she my rising sun.' "

That may be wrong, and I am to be taught better. But you wouldn't be displeased with me if things turned out so as I could leave this country and go to live at Snowfield? "

"No, Seth ; but I counsel you to wait patiently, and not lightly to leave your own country and kindred. Do nothing without the Lord's clear bidding. It's a bleak and barren country there, not like this land of Goshen you've been used to. We mustn't be in a hurry to fix and choose our own lot ; we must wait to be guided."

"But you'd let me write you a letter, Dinah, if there was anything I wanted to tell you."

"Yes, sure ; let me know if you're in any trouble. You'll be continually in my prayers."

They had now reached the yard-gate, and Seth said, "I won't go in, Dinah, so farewell." He paused and hesitated after she had given him her hand, and then said, "There is no knowing but what you may see things different after a while. There may be a new leading."

"Let us leave that, Seth. It's good to live only a moment at a time, as I've read in one of Mr. Wesley's books. It isn't

for you and me to lay plans ; we've nothing to do but to obey and to trust. Farewell."

Dinah pressed his hand with rather a sad look in her loving eyes, and then passed through the gate, while Seth turned away to walk lingeringly home. But, instead of taking the direct road, he chose to turn back along the field through which he and Dinah had already passed ; and I think his blue linen handkerchief was very wet with tears long before he had made up his mind that it was time for him to set his face steadily homeward. He was but three-and-twenty, and had just learned what it is to love—to love with that adoration which a young man gives to a woman whom he feels to be greater and better than himself. Love of this sort is hardly distinguishable from religious feeling. What deep and worthy love is so ? whether of woman or child, or art or music. Our caresses, our tender words, our still rapture under the influence of autumn sunsets, or pillared vistas, or calm, majestic statues, or Beethoven symphonies, all bring with them the consciousness that they are mere waves and ripples in an unfathomable ocean of love and beauty : our emotion in its keenest moment passes from expression into silence ; our love at its highest flood rushes beyond its object, and loses itself in the sense of divine mystery. And this blessed gift of venerating love has been given to too many humble craftsmen since the world began, for us to feel any surprise that it should have existed in the soul of a Methodist carpenter half a century ago, while there was yet a lingering after-glow from the time when Wesley and his fellow-laborer fed on the hips and haws of the Cornwall hedges, after exhausting limbs and lungs in carrying a divine message to the poor.

That after-glow has long faded away ; and the picture we are apt to make of Methodism in our imagination is not an amphitheatre of green hills, or the deep shade of broad-leaved sycamores, where a crowd of rough men and weary-hearted women drank in a faith which was a rudimentary culture, which linked their thoughts with the past, lifted their imagination above the sordid details of their own narrow lives, and suffused their souls with the sense of a pitying, loving, infinite Presence, sweet as summer to the houseless needy. It is too possible that to some of my readers Methodism may mean nothing more than low pitched gables up dingy streets, sleek grocers, sponging preachers, and hypocritical jargon—elements which are regarded as an exhaustive analysis of Methodism in many fashionable quarters.

That would be a pity; for I cannot pretend that Seth and Dinah were anything else than Methodists—not, indeed, of that modern type which reads quarterly reviews and attends in chapels with pillared porticoes, but of a very old-fashioned kind. They believed in present miracles, in instantaneous conversions, in revelations by dreams and visions; they drew lots and sought for Divine guidance by opening the Bible at hazard; having a literal way of interpreting the Scriptures, which is not at all sanctioned by approved commentators; and it is impossible for me to represent their diction as correct, or their instruction as liberal. Still—if I have read religious history aright—faith, hope, and charity have not always been found in a direct ratio with a sensibility to the three concords; and it is possible, thank Heaven! to have very erroneous theories and very sublime feelings. The raw bacon which clumsy Molly spares from her own scanty store, that she may carry it to her neighbor's child to “stop the fits,” may be a piteously ineffacious remedy; but the generous stirring of neighborly kindness that prompted the deed has a beneficent radiation that is not lost.

Considering these things, we can hardly think Dinah and Seth beneath our sympathy, accustomed as we may be to weep over the loftier sorrows of heroines in satin boots and crinoline, and of heroes riding fiery horses, themselves ridden by still more fiery passions.

Poor Seth! he was never on horseback in his life except once, when he was a little lad, and Mr. Jonathan Burge took him up behind, telling him to “hold on tight;” and, instead of bursting out into wild accusing apostrophes to God and destiny, he is resolving, as he now walks homeward under the solemn starlight, to repress his sadness, to be less bent on having his own will, and to live more for others, as Dinah does.

CHAPTER IV.

HOME AND ITS SORROWS.

A GREEN valley with a brook running through it, full almost to overflowing with the late rains, overhung by low stooping willows. Across this brook a plank is thrown, and

over this plank Adam Bede is passing with his undoubting step, followed close by Gyp with the basket, evidently making his way to the thatched house, with a stack of timber by the side of it, about twenty yards up the opposite slope.

The door of the house is open, and an elderly woman is looking out ; but she is not placidly contemplating the evening sunshine ; she has been watching with dim eyes the gradually enlarging speck which for the last few minutes she has been quite sure is her darling son Adam. Lisbeth Bede loves her son with the love of a woman to whom her first-born has come late in life. She is an anxious, spare, yet vigorous old woman, clean as a snowdrop. Her gray hair is turned neatly back under a pure linen cap with a black band round it ; her broad chest is covered with a buff neckerchief and below this you see a sort of short bed-gown made of blue checkered linen, tied round the waist and descending to the hips, from whence there is a considerable length of linsey-woolsey petticoat. For Lisbeth is tall, and in other points, too, there is a strong likeness between her and her son Adam. Her dark eyes are somewhat dim now—perhaps from too much crying—but her broadly marked eyebrows are still black, her teeth are sound, and, as she stands knitting rapidly and unconsciously with her work-hardened hands, she has as firmly-upright an attitude as when she is carrying a pail of water on her head from the spring. There is the same type of frame and the same keen activity of temperament in mother and son, but it was not from her that Adam got his well-filled brow and his expression of large-hearted intelligence.

Family likeness has often a deep sadness in it. Nature, that great tragic dramatist, knits us together by bone and muscle, and divides us by the subtler web of our brains ; blends yearning and repulsion, and ties us by our heart-strings to the beings that jar us at every movement. We hear a voice with the very cadence of our own uttering the thoughts we despise ; we see eyes—ah ! so like our mother's—averted from us in cold alienation ; and our last darling child startles us with the air and gestures of the sister we parted from in bitterness long years ago. The father to whom we owe our best heritage—the mechanical instinct, the keen sensibility to harmony, the unconscious skill of the modelling hand—galls us, and puts us to shame by his daily errors ; the long-lost mother, whose face we begin to see in the glass as our own wrinkles come, once fretted our young souls with her anxious humors and irrational persistence.

It is such a fond anxious mother's voice that you hear as Lisbeth says,

"Well, my lad, it's gone seven by th' clock. Thee't allays stay till the last child's born. Thee wants thy supper, I'll warrand. Where's Seth? gone arter some o's chapellin', I reckon?"

"Ay, ay, Seth's at no harm, mother, thee mayst be sure. But where's father?" said Adam, quickly, as he entered the house and glanced into the room on the left hand, which was used as a workshop. "Hasn't he done the coffin for Tholer? There's the stuff standing just as I left it this morning."

"Done the coffin?" said Lisbeth, following him, and knitting uninterruptedly, though she looked at her son very anxiously. "Eh, my lad, he went aff to Treddles'on this forenoon, an's niver come back. I doubt he's got to th' 'Wagin Overthrow' again."

A deep flush of anger passed rapidly over Adam's face. He said nothing but threw off his jacket, and began to roll up his shirt-sleeves again.

"What art goin' to do, Adam?" said the mother, with a tone and look of alarm. "Thee wouldstna go to work again wi'out ha'in' thy bit o' supper?"

Adam, too angry to speak, walked into the workshop. But his mother threw down her knitting, and, hurrying after him, took hold of his arm, and said, in a tone of plaintive remonstrance,

"Nay, my lad, my lad, thee munna go wi'out thy supper; there's the taters wi' the gravy in 'em, just as thee lik'st 'em. I sav'd 'em o' purpose for thee. Come an' ha' thy supper, come."

"Let be!" said Adam impetuously, shaking her off, and seizing one of the planks that stood against the wall. "It's fine talking about having supper when here's a coffin promised to be ready at Brox'on by seven o'clock to-morrow morning, and ought to ha' been there now, and not a nail struck yet. My throat's too full to swallow victuals."

"Why, thee canstna get the coffin ready," said Lisbeth. "Thee't work thyself to death. It 'ud take thee all night to do't."

"What signifies how long it takes me? Isn't the coffin promised? Can they bury the man without a coffin? I'd work my right hand off sooner than deceive people with lies i' that way. It makes me mad to think on't. I shall over-run these doings before long. I've stood enough of 'em."

Poor Lisbeth did not hear this threat for the first time, and if she had been wise she would have gone away quietly, and said nothing for the next hour. But one of the lessons a woman most rarely learns, is never to talk to an angry or a drunken man. Lisbeth sat down on the chopping bench and began to cry, and by the time she had cried enough to make her voice very piteous, she burst out into words.

"Nay, my lad, my lad, thee wouldstna go away an' break thy mother's heart, an' leave thy feyther to ruin. Thee wouldstna ha' 'em carry me to th' church-yard, an' thee not to follow me. I shanna rest i' my grave if I dunna see thee at th' last, an' how's they to let thee know as I'm a-dyin' if thee't gone a workin' i' distant parts, an' Seth belike gone arter thee, and thy feyther not able t' hold a pen for's hand shakin', besides not knowin' where thee art. Thee mun forgie thy feyther—thee munna be so bitter again' him. He war a good feyther to thee afore he took to th' drink. He's a clever workman, an' taught thee thy trade, remember, an's niver gen me a blow nor so much as an ill word—no, not even in's drink. Thee wouldstna ha' 'm go to th' workhus—thy own feyther—an' him as was a fine-growed man an' handy at iverythin' a'most as thee art thysen, five an' twenty 'ear ago, when thee wast a baby at the breast."

Lisbeth's voice became louder, and choked with sobs: a sort of wail, the most irritating of all sounds where real sorrows are to be borne, and real work to be done. Adam broke in impatiently.

"Now, mother, don't cry, and talk so. Haven't I got enough to vex me without that? What's th' use o' telling me things as I only think too much on every day? If I didna think on 'em, why should I do as I do, for the sake o' keeping things together here? But I hate to be talking where it's no use; I like to keep my breath for doing instead o' talking."

"I know thee dost things as nobody else 'ud do, my lad. But thee 't allays so hard upo' thy feyther, Adam. Thee think'st nothing too much to do for Seth; thee snapp'st me up if iver I find faut wi' th' lad. But thee 't so angered wi' thy feyther, more nor wi' any body else."

"That's better than speaking soft, and letting things go the wrong way, I reckon, isn't it? If I wasn't sharp with him, he'd sell every bit o' stuff i' th' yard, and spend it on drink. I know there's a duty to be done by my father, but it isn't my duty to encourage him in running headlong to ruin.

And what has Seth got to do with it? The lad does no harm as I know of. But leave me alone, mother, and let me get on with the work."

Lisbeth dared not say any more; but she got up and called Gyp, thinking to console herself somewhat for Adam's refusal of the supper she had spread out in the loving expectation of looking at him while he ate, by feeding Adam's dog with extra liberality. But Gyp was watching his master with wrinkled brow and ears erect, puzzled at this unusual course of things; and though he glanced at Lisbeth when she called him, and moved his fore-paws uneasily, well knowing that she was inviting him to supper, he was in a divided state of mind and remained seated on his haunches, again fixing his eyes anxiously on his master. Adam noticed Gyp's mental conflict, and though his anger had made him less tender than usual to his mother, it did not prevent him from caring as much as usual for his dog. We are apt to be kinder to the brutes that love us than to the women that love us. Is it because the brutes are dumb?

"Go, Gyp; go, lad!" Adam said, in a tone of encouraging command; and Gyp, apparently satisfied that duty and pleasure were one, followed Lisbeth into the house-place.

But no sooner had he licked up his supper than he went back to his master, while Lisbeth sat down alone, to cry over her knitting. Women who are never bitter and resentful are often the most querulous; and if Solomon was as wise as he is reputed to be, I feel sure that when he compared a contentious woman to a continual dropping on a very rainy day, he had not a vixen in his eye—a fury with long nails, acrid and selfish. Depend upon it, he meant a good creature, who had no joy but in the happiness of the loved ones whom she contributed to make uncomfortable, putting by all the tid-bits for them, and spending nothing on herself. Such a woman as Lisbeth, for example—at once patient and complaining, self-renouncing and exacting, brooding the livelong day over what happened yesterday, and what is likely to happen to-morrow, and crying very readily both at the good and the evil. But a certain awe mingled itself with her idolatrous love of Adam, and when he said, "leave me alone," she was always silenced.

So the hours passed, to the loud ticking of the old day-clock and the sound of Adam's tools. At last he called for a light and a draught of water (beer was a thing only to be drunk on holidays), and Lisbeth ventured to say as she

took it in, "Thy supper stan's ready for thee, when thee lik'st."

"Donna thee sit up, mother," said Adam, in a gentle tone. He had worked off his anger now, and whenever he wished to be especially kind to his mother, he fell into his strongest native accent and dialect, with which at other times his speech was less deeply tinged. "I'll see to father when he comes home; maybe he wonna come at all to-night. I shall be easier if thee't i' bed."

"Nay, I'll bide till Seth comes. He wonna be long now, I reckon."

It was then past nine by the clock, which was always in advance of the day, and before it had struck ten the latch was lifted, and Seth entered. He had heard the sound of the tools as he was approaching.

"Why, mother," he said, "how is it as father's working so late?"

"It's none o' thy father as is a-workin'—thee might know that well anooof if thy head warnna full o' chapellin'—it's thy brother as does ivery thing, for there's niver nobody else i' th' way to do nothin'."

Lisbeth was going on, for she was not at all afraid of Seth, and usually poured into his ears all the querulousness which was repressed by her awe of Adam. Seth had never in his life spoken a harsh word to his mother, and timid people always wreak their peevishness on the gentle. But Seth, with an anxious look, had passed into the workshop, and said,

"Addy, how's this? What! father's forgot the coffin?"

"Ay, lad, th' old tale; but I shall get it done," said Adam, looking up, and casting one of his bright, keen glances at his brother. "Why, what's the matter with thee? Thee't in trouble."

Seth's eyes were red, and there was a look of deep depression on his mild face.

"Yes, Addy, but it's what must be borne, and can't be helped. Why, thee'st never been to the school, then?"

"School! no; that screw can wait," said Adam, hammering away again.

"Let me take my turn now, and do thee go to bed," said Seth.

"No, lad, I'd rather go on, now I'm in harness. Thee't help me to carry it to Brox'on when it's done. I'll call thee up at sunrise. Go and eat thy supper, and shut the door, so as I mayn't hear mother's talk."

Seth knew that Adam always meant what he said, and was not to be persuaded into meaning anything else; so he turned, with rather a heavy heart, into the house-place.

"Adam's niver touched a bit o' victual sin' home he's come," said Lisbeth. "I reckon thee'st had thy supper at some o' thy Methody folks."

"Nay, mother," said Seth. "I've had no supper yet."

"Come, then," said Lisbeth, "but donna thee ate the taters, for Adam 'ull happen ate 'em if I leave'em stannin'. He loves a bit o' taters an' gravy. But he's been so sore an' angered, he wouldn't ate 'em, for all I'd putten 'em by o' purpose for him. An' he's been a threatenin' to go away again," she went on, whimpering, "an' I'm fast sure he'll go some dawnin' afore I'm up, an' niver let me know aforehand, an' he'll niver come back again when once he's gone. An' I'd better niver ha' had a son, as is like no other body's son for the deftness an' th' handiness, an' so looked on by th' grit folks, an' tall an' upright like a poplar tree, an' me to be parted from him, an' niver see'm no more."

"Come, mother, donna grieve thyself in vain," said Seth, in a soothing voice. "Thee'st not half so good reason to think as Adam 'ull go away as to think he'll stay with thee. He may say such a thing when he's in wrath—and he's got excuse for being wrathful sometimes—but his heart 'ud never let him g. Think how he's stood by us all when it's been none so asy—paying his savings to free me from going for a soldier, and turnin' his earnin's into wood for father, when he's got pl ntv o' uses for his money, and many a young man like him 'ud ha' been married and settled before now. He'll never turn round and knock down his own work, and forsake them as it's been the labor of his life to stand by."

"Donna talk to me about's marr'in'," said Lisbeth, crying afresh. "He's set's heart on that Hetty Sorrel, as 'ull niver save a penny, an' 'ull toss up her head at's old mother. An' to think as he might ha' Mary Burge, an' be took partners, an' be a big man wi' workmen under him, like Mester Burge—Dolly's told me so o'er an' o'er again—if it warna as he's set's heart on that bit of a wench, as is o' no more use nor the gilly-flower on the wall. An' he so wise at bookin' an' figurin', an' not to know no better nor that!"

"But, mother, thee know'st we canna love just where other folks 'ud have us. There's nobody but God can control the heart of man. I could ha' wished myself as Adam could ha' made another choice, but I wouldn't reproach him

for what he can't help. And I'm not sure but what he tries to o'ercome it. But it's a matter as he doesn't like to be spoke to about, and I can only pray to the Lord to bless and direct him."

"Ay, thee't allays ready enough at prayin', but I donna see as thee gets much wi' thy prayin'. Thee wotna get double earnin's o' this side Yule. Th' Methodies 'll niver make thee half the man thy brother is, for all they're a-making a preacher on thee."

"It's partly truth thee speak'st there, mother," said Seth, mildly; "Adam's far before me, an's done more for me than I can ever do for him. God distributes talents to every man according as he sees good. But thee mustna undervally prayer. Prayer mayna bring money, but it brings us what no money can buy—a power to keep from sin, and be content with God's will whatever He may please to send. If thee wouldst pray to God to help thee, and trust in His goodness, thee wouldstna be so uneasy about things."

"Unaisy? I'm i' th' right on't to be unaisy. It's well seen on *thee* what it is niver to be unaisy. Thee't gi' away all thy earnin's an' niver be unaisy as thee'st nothin' laid up again' a rainy day. If Adam had been as aisy as thee, he'd niver ha' had no money to pay for thee. Take no thought for the morrow—take no thought—that's what thee't allays sayin'; an' what comes on't? Why, as Adam has to take thought for thee."

"Those are the words o' the Bible, mother," said Seth. "They don't mean as we should be idle. They mean we shouldn't be over-anxious and worreting ourselves about what'll happen to-morrow, but do our duty, and leave the rest to God's will."

"Ay, ay, that's the way wi' thee: thee allays makes a peck o' thy own words out o' a pint o' the Bible's. I donna see how thee't to know as 'take no thought for the morrow' means all that. An' when the Bible's such a big book, an' thee canst read all thro't. an' ha' pick o' the texes, I canna think why thee dostna pick better words as donna mean so much more nor they say. Adam doesna pick a that'n; I can understan' the tex' as he's allays a-saying, 'God helps them as helps theirsens.'"

"Nay, mother," said Seth, "that's no text o' the Bible. It comes out of a book as Adam picked up at the stall at Ireddle'son. It was wrote by a knowing man, but over-worldly, I doubt. However, that saying's partly true; for the Bible tells us we must be workers together with God."

"Well how'm I to know? It sounds like a tex'. But what's the matter wi' th' lad? Thee't hardly eatin' a bit o' supper. Dostna mean to ha' no more nor that bit o' oat-cake? An' thee looks as white as a flick o' new bacon. What's th' matter wi' thee?"

"Nothing to mind about, mother; I'm not hungry. I'll just look in at Adam again, and see if he'll let me go on with the coffin."

"Ha' a drop o' warm broth," said Lisbeth, whose motherly feeling now got the better of her "nattering" habit. "I'll set two-three sticks alight in a minute."

"Nay, mother, thank thee; thee't very good," said Seth, gratefully; and, encouraged by this touch of tenderness, he went on: "Let us pray a bit with thee for father, and Adam, and all of us; it'll comfort thee, happen, more than thee think'st."

"Well, I've nothin' to say again' it."

Lisbeth, though disposed always to take the negative side in her conversations with Seth, had a vague sense that there was some comfort and safety in the fact of his piety, and that it somehow relieved her from the trouble of any spiritual transactions on her own behalf.

So the mother and son knelt down together, and Seth prayed for the poor wandering father, and for those who were sorrowing for him at home. And when he came to the petition that Adam might never be called to set up his tent in a far country, but that his mother might be cheered and comforted by his presence all the days of her pilgrimage, Lisbeth's ready tears flowed again, and she wept aloud.

When they rose from their knees, Seth went to Adam again, and said, "Wilt only lie down for an hour or two, and let me go on the while?"

"No, Seth. no. Make mother go to bed, and go thyself."

Meantime Lisbeth had dried her eyes, and now followed Seth, holding something in her hands. It was the brown-and-yellow platter containing the baked potatoes with the gravy in them, and bits of meat, which she cut and mixed among them. Those were dear times, when wheaten bread and fresh meat were delicacies to working people. She set the dish down rather timidly on the bench by Adam's side, and said, "Thee canst pick a bit while thee't workin'. I'll bring thee another drop o' water."

"Ay, mother, do" said Adam, kindly, "I'm getting very thirsty."

In half an hour all was quiet ; no sound was to be heard in the house but the loud ticking of the old day-clock, and the ringing of Adam's tools. The night was very still : when Adam opened the door to look out at twelve o'clock the only motion seemed to be in the glowing, twinkling stars ; every blade of grass was asleep.

Bodily haste and exertion usually leave our thoughts very much at the mercy of our feelings and imagination ; and it was so to-night with Adam. While his muscles were working lustily, his mind seemed as passive as a spectator at a diorama ; scenes of the sad past, and probably sad future, floating before him, and giving place one to the other in swift succession.

He saw how it would be to-morrow morning, when he had carried the coffin to Broxton and was at home again, having his breakfast : his father, perhaps, would come in, ashamed to meet his son's glance—would sit down, looking older and more tottering than he had done the morning before, and hang down his head, examining the floor-quarries ; while Lisbeth would ask him how he supposed the coffin had been got ready, that he had slinked off and left undone, for Lisbeth was always the first to utter the word of reproach, although she cried at Adam's severity toward his father.

"So it will go on, worsening and worsening," thought Adam ; "there's no slipping up hill again, and no standing still when once you've begun to slip down." And then the day came back to him when he was a little fellow, and used to run by his father's side, proud to be taken out to work, and prouder still to hear his father boasting to his fellow-workmen how "the little chap had an uncommon notion o' carpentering." What a fine, active fellow his father was then ! When people asked Adam whose little lad he was ? he had a sense of distinction as he answered, "I'm Thias Bede's lad,"—he was quite sure every body knew Thias Bede ; didn't he make the wonderful pigeon-house at Broxton parsonage ? Those were happy days, especially when Seth, who was three years the younger, began to go out working too, and Adam began to be a teacher as well as a learner. But then came the days of sadness, when Adam was some way on in his teens, and Thias began to loiter at the public-houses, and Lisbeth began to cry at home, and to pour forth her complaints in the hearing of her sons. Adam remembered well the night of shame and anguish when he first saw his father quite wild and foolish, shouting a song out fitfully among his drunken companions at

the "Wagon Overthrown." He had run away once when he was only eighteen, making his escape in the morning twilight with a little blue bundle over his shoulder, and his "mensuration book" in his pocket, and saying to himself very decidedly that he could bear the vexations of home no longer—he would go and seek his fortune, setting up his stick at the crossways and bending his steps the way it fell. But by the time he got to Stoniton, the thought of his mother and Seth, left behind to endure everything without him, became too importunate, and his resolution failed him. He came back the next day, but the misery and terror his mother had gone through in those two days had haunted her ever since.

"No!" Adam said to himself to-night, "that must never happen again. It 'ud make a poor balance when my doings are cast up at the last, if my poor old mother stood o' the wrong side. My back's broad enough and strong enough; I should be no better than a coward to go away and leave the troubles to be borne by them as aren't half so able. 'They that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of those that are weak, and not to please themselves.' There's a text wants no candle to show't; it shines by its own light. It's plain enough you get into the wrong road i' this life if you run after this and that only for the sake o' making things easy and pleasant to yourself. A pig may poke his nose into the trough and think o' nothing outside it; but if you've got a man's heart and soul in you, you can't be easy a-making your own bed an' leaving the rest to lie on the stones. Nay, nay, I'll never slip my neck out o' the yoke, and leave the load to be drawn by the weak 'uns. Father's a sore cross to me, an's likely to be for many a long year to come. What then? I've got th' health, and the limbs, and the sperrit to bear it."

At this moment a smart rap, as if with a willow wand, was given at the house door, and Gyp, instead of barking, as might have been expected, gave a loud howl. Adam, very much startled, went at once to the door and opened it. Nothing was there: all was still, as when he opened it an hour before; the leaves were motionless, and the light of the stars showed the placid fields on both sides of the brook quite empty of visible life. Adam walked round the house, and still saw nothing except a rat which darted into the wood-shed as he passed. He went in again, wondering; the sound was so peculiar that, the moment he heard it, it called up the image of the willow wand striking the door. He could not help a little shudder, as he remembered how often his mother

had told him of just such a sound coming as a sign when some one was dying. Adam was not a man to be gratuitously superstitious ; but he had the blood of the peasant in him as well as of the artisan, and a peasant can no more help believing in a traditional superstition than a horse can help trembling when he sees a camel. Besides, he had that mental combination which is at once humble in the region of mystery and keen in the region of knowledge ; it was the depth of his reverence quite as much as his hard common sense, which gave him his disinclination to doctrinal religion, and he often checked Seth's argumentative spiritualism by saying, " Eh, its a big mystery ; thee know'st but little about it." And so it happened that Adam was at once penetrating and credulous. If a new building had fallen down and he had been told that this was a divine judgment, he would have said, " May be ; but the bearing o' the roof and walls wasn't right, else it wouldn't ha' come down ;" yet he believed in dreams and prognostics, and you see he shuddered at the idea of the stroke with the willow wand.

But he had the best antidote against imaginative dread in the necessity for getting on with the coffin, and for the next ten minutes his hammer was ringing so uninterruptedly that other sounds, if there were any, might well be overpowered. A pause came, however, when he had to take up his ruler, and now again came the strange rap, and again Gyp howled. Adam was at the door without the loss of a moment ; but again all was still, and the starlight showed there was nothing but the dew-laden grass in front of the cottage.

Adam for a moment thought uncomfortably about his father ; but of late years he had never come home at dark hours from Treddleston, and there was every reason for believing that he was then sleeping off his drunkenness at the " Wagon Overthrown." Besides, to Adam the conception of the future was so inseparable from the painful image of his father, that the fear of any fatal accident to him was excluded by the deeply-infixed fear of his continual degradation. The next thought that occurred to him was one that made him slip off his shoes and tread lightly up stairs, to listen at the bed-room doors. But both Seth and his mother were breathing regularly.

Adam came down and set to work again, saying to himself, " I won't open the door again. It's no use staring about to catch sight of a sound. Maybe there's a world about us as we can't see, but th' ear's quicker than the eye, and catches

a sound from't now and then. Some people think they get a sight on't too, but they're mostly folks whose eyes are not much use to 'em at anything else. For my part, I think it's better to see when your perpendicular's true, than to see a ghost."

Such thoughts as these are apt to grow stronger and stronger as daylight quenches the candles and the birds begin to sing. By the time the red sunlight shone on the brass nails that formed the initials on the lid of the coffin, any lingering foreboding from the sound of the willow wand was merged in satisfaction that the work was done and the promise redeemed. There was no need to call Seth, for he was already moving overhead, and presently came down stairs.

"Now, lad," said Adam, as Seth made his appearance, "the coffin's done, and we can take it over to Brox'on and be back again before half after six. I'll take a mouthful o' oat-cake, and then we'll be off."

The coffin was soon propped on the tall shoulders of the two brothers, and they were making their way, followed close by Gyp, out of the little wood-yard into the lane at the back of the house. It was but about a mile and a half to Broxton over the opposite slope, and their road wound very pleasantly along lanes and across fields, where the pale woodbines and the dog-roses were scenting the hedgerows, and the birds were twittering and trilling in the tall leafy boughs of oak and elm. It was a strangely-mingled picture—the fresh youth of the summer morning, with its Eden-like peace and loveliness, the stalwart strength of the two brothers in their rusty working-clothes, and the long coffin on their shoulders. They paused for the last time before a small farm-house outside the village of Broxton. By six o'clock the task was done, the coffin nailed down, and Adam and Seth were on their way home. They chose a shorter way homeward, which would take them across the fields and the brook in front of the house. Adam had not mentioned to Seth what had happened in the night, but he still retained sufficient impression from it himself to say,

"Seth, lad, if father isn't come home by the time we've had our breakfast, I think it'll be as well for thee to go over to Treddles'on and look after him, and thee canst get me the brass wire I want. Never mind about losing an hour at thy work; we can make that up. What dost say?"

"I'm willing," said Seth. "But see what clouds have gathered since we set out. I'm thinking we shall have more rain. It'll be a sore time for th' haymaking if the meadows

are flooded again. The brook's fine and full now ; another day's rain 'ud cover the plank, and we should have to go round by the road."

They were coming across the valley now, and had entered the pasture through which the brook ran.

"Why, what's that sticking against the willow?" continued Seth, beginning to walk faster. Adam's heart rose to his mouth ; the vague anxiety about his father was changed into a great dread. He made no answer to Seth, but ran forward, preceded by Gyp, who began to bark uneasily ; and in two moments he was at the bridge.

This was what the omen meant, then ! And the gray-haired father, of whom he had thought with a sort of hardness a few hours ago, as certain to live to be a thorn in his side, was perhaps even then struggling with that watery death. This was the first thought that flashed through Adam's conscience, before he had time to seize the coat and drag out the tall heavy body. Seth was already by his side, helping him ; and when they had it on the bank, the two sons in the first moments knelt and looked with mute awe at the glazed eyes, forgetting that there was need of action—forgetting every thing but that their father lay dead before them. Adam was the first to speak.

"I'll run to mother," he said, in a loud whisper. "I'll be back to thee in a minute."

Poor Lisbeth was busy preparing her sons' breakfast, and their porridge was already steaming on the fire. Her kitchen always looked the pink of cleanliness, but this morning she was more than usually bent on making her hearth and breakfast-table look comfortable and inviting.

"The lads 'ull be fine an' hungry," she said, half aloud, as she stirred the porridge. "It's a good step to Brox'on, an' it's hungry air o'er the hill—wi' that heavy coffin too. Eh ! it's heavier now, wi' poor Bob Tholer in't. Howiver, I've made a drop more porridge nor common this mornin'. The feyther 'ull happen come in arter a bit. Not as he'll ate much porridge. He swallows sixpennorth o' ale, an' saves a hap'orth o' porridge—that's his way o' layin' by money, as I've told him many a time, an' am likely to tell him again afore the day's out. Eh ! poor mon, he takes it quiet enough ; there's no denyin' that."

But now Lisbeth heard the heavy "thud" of a running footstep on the turf, and, turning quickly toward the door, she saw Adam enter, looking so pale and overwhelmed that she

screamed aloud and rushed toward him before he had time to speak.

"Hush, mother," Adam said rather hoarsely, "don't be frightened. Father's tumbled into the water. Belike we may bring him round again. Seth and me are going to carry him in. Get a blanket, and make it hot at the fire."

In reality Adam was convinced that his father was dead, but he knew there was no other way of repressing his mother's impetuous wailing grief than by occupying her with some active task which had hope in it.

He ran back to Seth, and the two sons lifted the sad burden in heart-stricken silence. The wide-open, glazed eyes were gray, like Seth's, and had once looked with mild pride on the boys before whom Thias had lived to hang his head in shame. Seth's chief feeling was awe and distress at this sudden snatching away of his father's soul; but Adam's mind rushed back over the past in a flood of relenting and pity. When Death, the great Reconciler, has come, it is never our tenderness that we repent of, but our severity.

CHAPTER V.

THE RECTOR.

BEFORE twelve o'clock there had been some heavy storms of rain, and the water lay in deep gutters on the sides of the gravel-walks in the garden of Broxton Parsonage; the great Provence roses had been cruelly tossed by the wind and beaten by the rain, and all the delicate-stemmed border-flowers had been dashed down and stained with the wet soil. A melancholy morning—because it was nearly time hay harvest should begin, and instead of that the meadows were likely to be flooded.

But people who have pleasant homes get in-door enjoyments that they would never think of but for the rain. If it had not been a wet morning Mr. Irwine would not have been in the dining-room playing at chess with his mother, and he loves both his mother and chess quite well enough to pass some cloudy hours very easily by their help. Let me take you

into that dining-room, and show you the Rev. Adolphus Irwine Rector of Broxton, Vicar of Hayslope, and Vicar of Blythe, a pluralist at whom the severest Church-reformer would have found it difficult to look sour. We will enter very softly, and stand still in the open doorway, without awaking the glossy-brown setter who is stretched across the hearth, with her two puppies beside her; or the pug, who is dozing with his black muzzle aloft, like a sleepy president.

The room is a large and lofty one, with an ample mulioned oriel window at one end; the walls, you see, are new, and not yet painted; but the furniture, though originally of an expensive sort, is old and scanty, and there is no drapery about the window. The crimson cloth over the large dining-table is very threadbare, though it contrasts pleasantly enough with the dead hue of the plaster on the walls; but on this cloth there is a massive silver waiter with a decanter of water on it, of the same pattern as two larger ones that are propped up on the sideboard with a coat of arms conspicuous in their centre. You suspect at once that the inhabitants of this room have inherited more blood than wealth, and would not be surprised to find that Mr. Irwine had a finely-cut nostril and upper lip; but at present we can only see that he has a broad flat back and an abundance of powdered hair, all thrown backward and tied behind with a black ribbon—a bit of conservatism in costume which tells you that he is not a young man. He will perhaps turn round by and by, and in the mean time we can look at that stately old lady, his mother, a beautiful aged brunette, whose rich-toned complexion is well set off by the complex wrappings of pure white cambric and lace about her head and neck. She is as erect in her comely embonpoint as a statue of Ceres, and her dark face, with its delicate aquiline nose, firm proud mouth, and small intense black eye, is so keen and sarcastic in its expression that you instinctively substitute a pack of cards for the chess-men, and imagine her telling your fortune. The small brown hand with which she is lifting her queen is laden with pearls, diamonds, and turquoises; and the large black veil is very carefully adjusted over the crown of her cap, and falls in sharp contrast on the white folds about her neck. It must take a long time to dress that old lady in the morning! But it seems a law of nature that she should be dressed so; she is clearly one of those children of loyalty who have never doubted their right divine, and never met with any one so absurd as to question it.

"There, Dauphin, tell me what that is!" says this magnificent old lady, as she deposits her queen very quietly and folds her arms. "I should be sorry to utter a word disagreeable to your feelings."

"Ah! you witch-mother, you sorceress! How is a Christian man to win a game of you? I should have sprinkled the board with holy water before we began. You've not won that game by fair means, now, so don't pretend it."

"Yes, yes, that's what the beaten have always said of great conquerors. But see, there's the sunshine falling on that board, to show you more clearly what a foolish move you made with that pawn. Come, shall I give you another chance?"

"No, mother, I shall leave you to your own conscience, now it's clearing up. We must go and plash up the mud a little, mustn't we, Juno?" This was addressed to the brown setter, who had jumped up at the sound of the voices and laid her nose in an insinuating way on her master's leg. "But I must go up stairs first and see Anne. I was called away to Tholer's funeral just when I was going before."

"It's of no use, child; she can't speak to you. Kate says she has one of her worst headaches this morning."

"Oh, she likes me to go and see her just the same; she's never too ill to care about that."

If you know how much of human speech is mere purposeless impulse or habit, you will not wonder when I tell you that this identical objection had been made, and had received the same kind of answer, many hundred times in the course of the fifteen years that Mr. Irwine's sister Anne had been an invalid. Splendid old ladies, who take a long time to dress in the morning, have often slight sympathy with sickly daughters.

But while Mr. Irwine was still seated, leaning back in his chair and stroking Juno's head, the servant came to the door and said, "If you please, sir, Joshua Rann wishes to speak with you, if you're at liberty."

"Let him be shown in here," said Mrs. Irwine, taking up her knitting. "I always like to hear what Mr. Rann has got to say. His shoes will be dirty, but see that he wipes them, Carrol."

In two minutes Mr. Rann appeared at the door with very deferential bows, which, however, were far from conciliating Pug, who gave a sharp bark, and ran across the room to reconnoitre the stranger's legs; while the two puppies, regard-

ing Mr. Rann's prominent calf and ribbed worsted stockings from a more sensuous point of view, plunged and growled over them in great enjoyment. Meantime, Mr. Irwine turned round his chair and said,

"Well, Joshua, anything the matter at Hayslope, that you've come over this morning? Sit down, sit down. Never mind the dogs; give them a friendly kick. Here, Pug, you rascal!"

It is very pleasant to see some men turn round; pleasant as a sudden rush of warm air in winter, or the flash of fire-light in the chill dusk. Mr. Irwine was one of those men. He bore the same sort of resemblance to his mother that our loving memory of a friend's face often bears to the face itself; the lines were all more generous, the smiles brighter, the expression heartier. If the outline had been less finely cut, his face might have been called jolly; but that was not the right word for its mixture of bonhommie and distinction.

"Thank your reverence," answered Mr. Rann, endeavoring to look unconcerned about his legs, but shaking them alternately to keep off the puppies; "I'll stand, if you please, as more becoming. I hope I see you and Mrs. Irwine well, an' Miss Irwine—an' Miss Anne, I hope's as well as usual."

"Yes, Joshua, thank you. You see how blooming my mother looks. She beats us younger people hollow. But what's the matter?"

"Why, sir, I had to come to Brox'on to deliver some work, and I thought it but right to call and let you know the goin's-on as there's been i' the village, such as I hanna seen i' my time, and I've lived in it man and boy sixty year come St. Thomas, and collected the Easter dues for Mr. Blick before your reverence come into the parish, and been at the ringin' o' every bell, and the diggin' o' every grave, and sung i' the quire long afore Bartle Massey come from nobody knows where, wi' his counter-singin' and fine anthems, as puts everybody out but himself—one takin' it up after another like sheep a-bleatin' i' the fould. I know what belongs to bein' a parish clerk, and I know as I should be wantin' i' respect to your reverence, an' church, an' king, if I was t' allow such goin's-on wi'out speakin'. I was took by surprise, an' knowed nothin' on it beforehand, an' I was so flustered, I was clean as if I'd lost my tools. I hanna slep more than four hour this night as is past an' gone; an' then it was nothin' but nightmare, as tired me worse nor walkin'."

"Why, what in the world is the matter, Joshua? Have the thieves been at the church lead again?"

"Thieves! no, sir—an' yet, as I may say, it *is* thieves, an' a-thievin' the church too. It's the Methodisses as is like to get th' upper hand i' th' parish, if your reverence an' his honor, Squire Donnithorne, doesna think well to say the word an' forbid it. Not as I'm a dictatin' to you sir; I'm not forgettin' myself so far as to be wise above my betters. Howiver, whether I'm wise or no, that's neither here nor there, but what I've got to say I say—as the young Methodist woman, as is at Mester Poyser's, was a-preachin' an' a-prayin' on the Green last night, as sure as I'm a stannin' afore your reverence now."

"Preaching on the Green!" said Mr. Irwine, looking surprised, but quite serene. "What, that pale, pretty young woman I've seen at Poyser's? I saw she was a Methodist, or Quaker, or something of that sort, by her dress, but I didn't know she was a preacher."

"It's a true word as I say, sir," rejoined Mr. Rann, compressing his mouth into a semicircular form, and pausing long enough to indicate three notes of exclamation. "She preached on the Green last night; an' she's laid hold o' Chad's Bess, as the girl's been i' fits welly iver sin'."

"Well, Bessy Cranage is a hearty-looking lass; I dare say she'll come round again, Joshua. Did anybody else go into fits?"

"No, sir, I canna say as they did. But there's no knowin' what'll come, if we're t' have such preachin's as that a-goin' on ivery week; there'll be no livin' i' the village. For them Methodisses make folks believe as they take a mug o' drink extry, an' make theirselves a bit comfortable, they'll have to go to hell for't as sure as they're born. I'm not a tipplin' man nor a drunkard—nobody can say it on me—but I like a extry quart at Easter or Christmas time, as is nat'ral when we're goin' the rounds a-singin' an' folks offer't you for nothin'; or when I'm a collectin' the dues; an' I like a pint, wi' my pipe, an' a neighborly chat at Mester Casson's now and then, for I was brought up i' the Church, thank God, an' ha' been a parish clerk this two an' thirty year; I should know what the Church religion is."

"Well, what's your advice, Joshua? What do you think should be done?"

"Well, your reverence, I'm not for takin' any measures again' the young woman. She's well enough if she'd let alone

preachin', an' I hear as she's a-goin' away back to her own country soon. She's Mr. Poyser's own niece, an' I donna wish to say what's any ways disrespectful o' th' family at th' Hall Farm, as I've measured for shoes, little an' big, welly iver sin' I've been a shoemaker. But there's that Will Maskery, sir, as is the rampageousest Methodis as can be, an' I make no doubt it was him as stirred up th' young woman to preach last night, an' he'll be a-bringin' other folks to preach from 'Treddles'on, if his comb isn't cut a bit; an' I think as he should be let know as he isna t' have the makin' an' mendin' o' church carts an' implemen's, let alone stayin' i' that house and yard as is Squire Donnithorne's."

"Well, but you say yourself, Joshua, that you never knew any one come to preach on the Green before; why should you think they'll come again? The Methodists don't come to preach in little villages like Hayslope, where there's only a handful of laborers, too tired to listen to them. They might almost as well go and preach on the Binton Hills. Will Maskery is no preacher himself, I think."

"Nay, sir, he's no gift at stringin' the words together wi'out book; he'd be stuck fast like a cow i' wet clay. But he's got tongue enough to speak disrespectful about's neebors, for he said as I was a blind Pharisee—a-usin' the Bible i' that way to find nicknames for folks as are his elders an' betters! and, what's worse, he's been heard to say very un-becomin' words about your reverence; for I could bring them as 'ud swear as he called you a 'dumb dog' an' a 'idle shepherd.' You'll forgie me for sayin' such things over again."

"Better not, better not, Joshua. Let evil words die as soon as they're spoken. Will Maskery might be a great deal worse fellow than he is. He used to be a wild, drunken rascal, neglecting his work and beating his wife, they told me; now he's thrifty and decent, and he and his wife look comfortable together. If you can bring me any proof that he interferes with his neighbors, and creates any disturbance, I shall think it my duty as a clergyman and a magistrate to interfere. But it wouldn't become wise people, like you and me, to be making a fuss about trifles, as if we thought the Church was in danger because Will Maskery lets his tongue wag rather foolishly, or a young woman talks in a serious way to a handful of people on the Green. We must 'live and let live,' Joshua, in religion as well as in other things. You go on doing your duty, as parish clerk and sexton, as well as you've always done it, and making those

capital thick boots for your neighbors, and things won't go far wrong in Hayslope, depend upon it."

"Your reverence is very good to say so; an' I'm sensible as, you not livin' i' the parish, there's more upo' my shoulders."

"To be sure; and you must mind and not lower the Church in people's eyes by seeming to be frightened about it for a little thing, Joshua. I shall trust to your good sense, now, to take no notice at all of what Will Maskery says, either about you or me. You and your neighbors can go on taking your pot of beer soberly, when you've done your day's work, like good Churchmen; and if Will Maskery doesn't like to join you, but to go to a prayer-meeting at Treddleston instead, let him; that's no business of yours, so long as he doesn't hinder you from doing what you like. And as to people saying a few idle words about us, we must not mind that, any more than the old church steeple minds the rooks cawing about it. Will Maskery comes to church every Sunday afternoon, and does his wheelwright's business steadily in the week days, and as long as he does that he must be let alone."

"Ah! sir, but when he comes to church, he sits an' shakes his head, an' looks as sour an' as coxy when we're a-singin', as I should like to fetch him a rap across the jowl—God forgi'e me—an' Mrs. Irwine, an' your reverence, too, for speakin' so afore you. An' he said as our Christmas singin' was no better nor the cracklin' o' thorns under a pot."

"Well, he's got a bad ear for music, Joshua. When people have wooden heads, you know, it can't be helped. He won't bring the other people in Hayslope round to his opinion while you go on singing as well as you do."

"Yes, sir; but it turns a man's stomach t' hear the Scripture misused i' that way. I know as much o' the words o' the Bible as he does, an' could say the Psalms right through i' my sleep if you was to pinch me; but I know better nor to take 'em to say my own say wi'. I might as well take the Sacrimment-cup home and use it at meals."

"That's a very sensible remark of yours, Joshua; but, as I said before—"

While Mr. Irwine was speaking, the sound of a booted step and the clink of a spur were heard on the stone floor of the entrance-hall, and Joshua Rann moved hastily aside from the doorway to make room for some one who paused there, and said, in a ringing tenor voice,

"Godson Arthur ; may he come in ?"

"Come in, come in, godson !" Mrs. Irwine answered, in the deep half-masculine tone which belongs to the vigorous old woman, and there entered a young gentleman in a riding-dress, with his right arm in a sling ; whereupon followed that pleasant confusion of laughing interjections, and hand-shakings, and "How are you's ?" mingled with joyous short barks and wagging of tails on the part of the canine members of the family, which tells that the visitor is on the best terms with the visited. The young gentleman was Arthur Donnithorne, known in Hayslope, variously, as "the young squire," "the heir," and "the captain." He was only a captain in the Loamshire Militia ; but to the Hayslope tenants he was more intensely a captain than all the young gentlemen of the same rank in his majesty's regulars ; he outshone them as the planet Jupiter outshines the Milky Way. If you want to know more particularly how he looked, call to your remembrance some tawny-whiskered, brown-locked, clear-complexioned young Englishman whom you have met with in a foreign town, and been proud of as a fellow-countryman—well-washed, high-bred, white-handed, yet looking as if he could deliver well from the left shoulder, and floor his man ; I will not be so much of a tailor as to trouble your imagination with the difference of costume, and insist on the striped waistcoat, long-tailed coat, and low top-boots.

Turning round to take a chair, Captain Donnithorne said, "But don't let me interrupt Joshua's business—he has something to say."

"Humbly begging your honor's pardon," said Joshua, bowing low, "there was one thing I had to say to his reverence as other things had drove out o' my head."

"Out with it, Joshua, quickly !" said Mr. Irwine.

"Belike, sir, you havena heard as Thias Bede's dead—drownded this morning, or more like over night, i' the Willow Brook, again' the bridge right i' front o' the house."

"Ah !" exclaimed both the gentlemen at once, as if they were a good deal interested in the information.

"An' Seth Bede's been to me this morning to say he wished me to tell your reverence as his brother Adam begged of you particular t' allow his father's grave to be dug by the White Thorn, because his mother's set her heart on it, on account of a dream as she had ; an' they'd ha come theirselves to ask you, but they've so much to see after with the crowner an' that ; an' their mother's took on so, an' wants 'em to make

sure o' the spot for fear somebody else should take it. An' if your reverence sees well and good, I'll send my boy to tell 'em as soon as I get home ; an' that's why I make bold to trouble you wi' it, his honor being present."

"To be sure, Joshua, to be sure, they shall have it. I'll ride round to Adam myself, and see him. Send your boy, however, to say they shall have the grave, lest any thing should happen to detain me. And now, good-morning, Joshua ; go into the kitchen and have some ale."

"Poor old Thias !" said Mr. Irwine, when Joshua was gone. "I'm afraid the drink helped the brook to drown him. I should have been glad for the load to have been taken off my friend Adam's shoulders in a less painful way. That fine fellow has been propping up his father from ruin for the last five or six years."

"He's a regular trump, is Adam," said Captain Donnithorne. "When I was a little fellow, and Adam was a strapping lad of fifteen, and taught me carpentering, I used to think if ever I was a rich sultan, I would make Adam my grandvizier. And I believe now, he would bear the exaltation as well as any poor wise man in an Eastern story. If ever I live to be a large-acred man, instead of a poor devil, with a mortgaged allowance of pocket-money, I'll have Adam for my right-hand. He shall manage my woods for me, for he seems to have a better notion of those things than any man I ever met with ; and I know he would make twice the money of them that my grandfather does with that miserable old Satchell to manage, who understands no more about timber than an old carp. I've mentioned the subject to my grandfather once or twice, but for some reason or other he has a dislike to Adam, and I can do nothing. But come, your reverence, are you for a ride with me ? It's splendid out of doors now. We can go to Adam's together, if you like it ; but I want to call at the Hall Farm on my way, to look at the whelps Poyser is keeping for me."

"You must stay and have lunch first, Arthur," said Mrs. Irwine. "It's nearly two. Carrol will bring it in directly."

"I want to go to the Hall Farm too," said Mr. Irwine, "to have another look at the little Methodist who is staying there. Joshua tells me she was preaching on the Green last night."

"Oh, by Jove !" said Captain Donnithorne, laughing. "Why, she looks as quiet as a mouse. There's something rather striking about her though. I positively felt quite bash-

ful the first time I saw her ; she was sitting stooping over her sewing in the sunshine outside the house, when I rode up and called out, without noticing that she was a stranger, ' Is Martin Poyser at home ? ' I declare, when she got up and looked at me, and just said, ' He's in the house, I believe ; I'll go and call him,' I felt quite ashamed of having spoken so abruptly to her. She looked like St. Catherine in a Quaker dress. It's a type of a face one rarely sees among our common people."

" I should like to see the young woman, Dauphin," said Mrs. Irwine. " Make her come here on some pretext or other."

" I don't know how I can manage that, mother ; it will hardly do for me to patronize a Methodist preacher, even if she would consent to be patronized by an idle shepherd, as Will Maskery calls me. You should have come in a little sooner, Arthur, to hear Joshua's denunciation of his neighbor Will Maskery. The old fellow wants me to excommunicate the wheelwright, and then deliver him over to the civil arm—that is to say, to your grandfather—to be turned out of house and yard. If I chose to interfere in this business now, I might get up as pretty a story of hatred and persecution as the Methodists need desire to publish in the next number of their Magazine. It wouldn't take me much trouble to persuade Chad Cranage and half a dozen other bull-headed fellows, that they would be doing an acceptable service to the Church by hunting Will Maskery out of the village with rope-ends and pitchforks ; and then, when I had furnished them with half a sovereign to get gloriously drunk after their exertions, I should have put the climax to as pretty a farce as any of my brother clergy have set going in their parishes for the last thirty years."

" It is really insolent of the man, though, to call you an ' idle shepherd,' and a ' dumb dog,' " said Mrs. Irwine ; " I should be inclined to check him a little there. You're too easy-tempered, Dauphin."

" Why, mother, you don't think it would be a good way of sustaining my dignity to set about vindicating myself from the aspersions of Will Maskery ? Besides, I'm not so sure that they *are* aspersions. I *am* a lazy fellow, and get terribly heavy in my saddle ; not to mention that I'm always spending more than I can afford in bricks and mortar, so that I get savage at a lame beggar when he asks me for sixpence. Those poor lean cobblers, who think they can help to regenerate mankind

by setting out to preach in the morning twilight before they begin their day's work, may well have a poor opinion of me. But come, let us have our luncheon. Isn't Kate coming to lunch?"

"Miss Irwine told Bridget to take her lunch up stairs," said Carol; "she can't leave Miss Anne."

"Oh, very well. Tell Bridget to say I'll go up and see Miss Anne presently. You can use your right arm quite well now, Arthur," Mr. Irwine continued, observing that Captain Donnithorne had taken his arm out of the sling.

"Yes, pretty well; but Godwin insists on my keeping it up constantly for some time to come. I hope I shall be able to get away to the regiment, though, in the beginning of August. It's a desperately dull business being shut up at the chase in the summer months, when one can neither hunt nor shoot, so as to make one's self pleasantly sleepy in the evening. However, we are to astonish the echoes on the 30th of July. My grandfather has given me *carte blanche* for once, and I promise you the entertainment shall be worthy of the occasion. The world will see the grand epoch of my majority twice. I think I shall have a lofty throne for you, god-mamma, or rather two, one on the lawn and another in the ball room, that you may sit and look down upon us like an Olympian goddess."

"I mean to bring out my best brocade, that I wore at your christening twenty years ago," said Mrs. Irwine. "Ah, I think I shall see your poor mother flitting about in her white dress, which looked to me almost like a shroud that very day; and it *was* her shroud only three months after; and your little cap and christening dress were buried with her too. She had set her heart on that, sweet soul! Thank God you take after your mother's family, Arthur! If you had been a puny, wiry, yellow baby, I wouldn't have stood godmother to you. I should have been sure you would turn out a Donnithorne. But you were such a broad-faced, broad-chested, loud-screaming rascal, I knew you were every inch of you a Tradgett."

"But you might have been a little too hasty there, mother," said Mr. Irwine, smiling. "Don't you remember how it was with Juno's last pups? One of them was the very image of its mother, but it had two or three of its father's tricks notwithstanding. Nature is clever enough to cheat even you, mother."

"Nonsense, child! Nature never makes a ferret in the shape of a mastiff. You'll never persuade me that I can't tell

what men are by their outsides. If I don't like a man's looks, depend upon it I shall never like *him*. I don't want to know people that look ugly and disagreeable, any more than I want to taste dishes that look disagreeable. If they make me shudder at the first glance, I say, take them away. An ugly, pig-gish, or fishy eye, now, makes me feel quite ill ; it's like a bad smell."

"Talking of eyes," said Captain Donnithorne, "that reminds me that I have got a book I meant to bring you, god-mamma. It came down in a parcel from London the other day. I know you are fond of queer, wizard-like stories. It's a volume of poems, 'Lyrical Ballads ;' most of them seem to be twaddling stuff ; but the first is in a different style—'The Ancient Mariner' is the title. I can hardly make head or tail of it as a story, but it's a strange, striking thing. I'll send it over to you ; and there are some other books that *you* may like to see, Irwine—pamphlets about Antinomianism and Evangelicalism, whatever they may be. I can't think what the fellow means by sending such things to me. I have written to him to desire that from henceforth he will send me no book or pamphlet on any thing that ends in *ism*."

"Well, I don't know that I'm very fond of *isms* myself ; but I may as well look at the pamphlets ; they let one see what is going on. Iv'e a little matter to attend to, Arthur," continued Mr. Irwine, rising to leave the room, "and then I shall be ready to set out with you."

The little matter that Mr. Irwine had to attend to took him up the old stone staircase (part of the house was very old), and made him pause before a door at which he knocked gently. "Come in," said a woman's voice, and he entered a room so darkened by blinds and curtains that Miss Kate, the thin middle-aged lady standing by the bedside, would not have had light enough for any other sort of work than the knitting which lay on the little table near her. But at present she was doing what required only the dimmest light—sponging the aching head that lay on the pillow with fresh vinegar. It was a small face, that of the poor sufferer ; perhaps it had once been pretty, but now it was worn and sallow. Miss Kate came toward her brother and whispered, "Don't speak to her ; she can't bear to be spoken to to-day." Anne's eyes were closed, and her brow contracted as if from intense pain. Mr. Irwine went to the bedside, and took up one of the delicate hands and kissed it ; a slight pressure from the small fingers told him that it was worth while to have come up stairs

for the sake of doing that. He lingered a moment, looking at her, and then turned away and left the room, treading very gently—he had taken off his boots and put on slippers before he came up stairs. Whoever remembers how many things he has declined to do even for himself, rather than have the trouble of putting on or taking off his boots, will not think this last detail insignificant.

And Mr. Irwine's sisters, as any person of family within ten miles of Broxton could have testified, were such stupid, uninteresting women! It was quite a pity handsome, clever Mrs. Irwine should have had such commonplace daughters. That fine old lady herself was worth driving ten miles to see, any day; her beauty, her well-preserved faculties, and her old-fashioned dignity, made her quite a graceful subject for conversation in turn with the king's health, the sweet new patterns in cotton dresses, the news from Egypt, and Lord Dacey's law-suit, which was fretting poor Lady Dacey to death. But no one ever thought of mentioning the Miss Irwines, except the poor people in Broxton village, who regarded them as deep in the science of medicine, and spoke of them vaguely as "the gentlefolks." If any one had asked old Job Dumilow who gave him his flannel jacket, he would have answered, "The gentlefolks, last winter;" and Widow Steene dwelt much on the virtues of the "stuff" the gentlefolks gave her for her cough. Under this name, too, they were used with great effect as a means of taming refractory children, so that at the sight of poor Miss Anne's sallow face, several small urchins had a terrified sense that she was cognizant of all their worst misdemeanors, and knew the precise number of stones with which they had intended to hit Farmer Britton's ducks. But for all who saw them through a less mythical medium, the Miss Irwines were quite superfluous existences—inartistic figures, crowding the canvas of life without adequate effect. Miss Anne, if her chronic headaches could have been accounted for by a pathetic story of disappointed love, might have had some romantic interest attached to her; but no such story had either been known or invented concerning her, and the general impression was quite in accordance with the fact that both the sisters were old maids for the prosaic reason that they had never received an eligible offer.

Nevertheless, to speak paradoxically, the existence of insignificant people has very important consequences in the world. It can be shown to affect the price of bread and the rate of wages, to call forth many evil tempers from the selfish,

and many heroisms from the sympathetic, and in other ways to play no small part in the tragedy of life. And if that handsome, generous-blooded clergyman, the Rev. Adolphus Irwine, had not had these two hopelessly-maiden sisters, his lot would have been shaped quite differently: he would very likely have taken a comely wife in his youth, and now, when his hair was getting gray under the powder, would have had tall sons and blooming daughters—such possessions, in short, as men commonly think will repay them for all the labor they take under the sun. As it was—having with all his three livings no more than seven hundred a year, and seeing no way of keping his splendid mother and his sickly sister, not to reckon a second sister, who was usually spoken of without any adjective, in such lady-like ease as became their birth and habits, and at the same time of providing for a family of his own—he remained, you see, at the age of eight-and-forty, a bachelor, not making any merit of that renunciation, but saying, laughingly, if any one alluded to it, that he made it an excuse for many indulgences which a wife would never have allowed him. And perhaps he was the only person in the world who did not think his sisters uninteresting and superfluous; for his was one of those large-hearted, sweet-blooded natures that never know a narrow or a grudging thought—epicurean, if you will—with no enthusiasm, no self-scourging sense of duty; but yet, as you have seen, of a sufficiently subtle moral fibre to have an unwearying tenderness for obscure and monotone suffering. It was his large-hearted indulgence that made him ignore his mother's hardness toward her daughters, which was the more striking from its contrast with her doting fondness toward himself; he held it no virtue to frown at irremediable faults.

See the difference between the impression a man makes on you when you walk by his side in familiar talk, or look at him in his home, and the figure he makes when seen from a lofty historical level, or even in the eyes of a critical neighbor who thinks of him as an embodied system or opinion rather than as a man. Mr. Roe, the "travelling preacher" stationed at Treddleston, had included Mr. Irwine in a general statement concerning the church clergy in the surrounding district, whom he described as men given up to the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life; hunting and shooting, and adorning their own houses; asking what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?—careless of dispensing the bread of life to their flocks, preaching at best but a carnal and soul-benumbing morality, and trafficking in

the souls of men by receiving money for discharging the pastoral office in parishes where they did not so much as look on the faces of the people more than once a year. The ecclesiastical historian, too, looking into parliamentary reports of that period, finds honorable members zealous for the Church, and untainted with any sympathy for the "tribe of canting Methodists," making statements scarcely less melancholy than that of Mr. Roe. And it is impossible for me to say that Mr. Irwine was altogether belied by the generic classification assigned him. He really had no very lofty aims, no theological enthusiasm; if I were closely questioned, I should be obliged to confess that he felt no serious alarms about the souls of his parishoners, and would have thought it a mere loss of time to talk in a doctrinal and awakening manner to old "Feyther Taft," or even to Chad Cranage the blacksmith. If he had been in the habit of speaking theoretically, he would, perhaps, have said that the only healthy form religion could take in such minds was that of certain dim but strong emotions, suffusing themselves as a hallowing influence over the family affections and neighborly duties. He thought the custom of baptism more important than its doctrine, and that the religious benefits the peasant drew from the church where his father worshipped and the sacred piece of turf where they lay buried, were but slightly dependent on a clear understanding of the Liturgy or the sermon. Clearly, the rector was not what is called in these days an "earnest" man: he was fonder of church history than of divinity, and had much more insight into men's characters than interest in their opinions, he was neither laborious, nor obviously self-denying, nor very copious in alms-giving, and his theology, you perceive, was lax. His mental palate, indeed, was rather pagan, and found a savoriness in a quotation from Sophocles or Theocritus that was quite absent from any text in Isaiah or Amos. But if you feed our young setter on raw flesh, how can you wonder on its retaining a relish for uncooked partridge in after life? and Mr. Irwine's recollections of young enthusiasm and ambition were all associated with poetry and ethics that lay aloof from the Bible.

On the other hand, I must plead, for I have an affectionate partiality toward the rector's memory, that he was not vindictive—and some philanthropists have been so; that he was not intolerant—and there is a rumor that some theologians have not been altogether free from that blemish; that, although he would probably have declined to give his body to be burned

in any public cause, and he was far from bestowing all his goods to feed the poor, he had that charity which has sometimes been lacking to very illustrious virtue—he was fender to other men's failings, and unwilling to impute evil. He was one of those men, and they are not the commonest, of whom we can know the best only by following them away from the market-place, the platform, and the pulpit, entering with them into their own homes, hearing the voice with which they speak to the young and aged about their own hearthstone, and witnessing their thoughtful care for the every-day wants of every-day companions, who take all their kindness as a matter of course, and not as a subject for panegyric.

Such men, happily, have lived in times when great abuses flourished, and have sometimes even been the living representatives of the abuses. That is a thought which might comfort us a little under the opposite fact—that it is better sometimes *not* to follow great reformers of abuses beyond the threshold of their homes.

But, whatever you may think of Mr. Irwine now, if you had met him that June afternoon riding on his gray cob, with his dogs running beside him—portly, upright, manly, with a good-natured smile on his finely-turned lips as he talked to his dashing young companion on the bay mare, you must have felt that, however ill he harmonized with sound theories of the clerical office, he somehow harmonized extremely well with that peaceful landscape.

See them in the bright sunlight, interrupted every now and then by rolling masses of cloud, ascending the slope from the Broxton side, where the tall gables and elms of the Rectory predominate over the tiny whitewashed church. They will soon be in the parish of Hayslope; the gray church-tower and village roofs lie before them to the left, and farther on, to the right, they can just see the chimneys of the Hall Farm.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HALL FARM.

EVIDENTLY that gate is never opened ; for the long grass and the great hemlocks grow close against it ; and if it were opened, it is so rusty that the force necessary to turn it on its hinges would be likely to pull down the square stone-pillars, to the detriment of the two stone lionesses which grin, with a doubtful carnivorous affability, above a coat of arms surmounting each of the pillars. It would be easy enough, by the aid of the nicks in the stone pillars, to climb over the brick wall, with its smooth stone coping ; but by putting our eyes close to the rusty bars of the gate we can see the old house well enough, and all but the very corners of the grassy enclosure.

It is a very fine old place, of red brick, softened by a pale powdery lichen which has dispersed itself with happy irregularity, so as to bring the red brick into terms of friendly companionship with the limestone ornaments surrounding the three gables, the windows, and the door-place. But the windows are patched with wooden panes, and the door, I think, is like the gate—it is never opened ; how it would groan and grate against the stone floor if it were ! For it is a solid, heavy, handsome door and must once have been in the habit of shutting with a sonorous bang behind a liveried lackey, who had just seen his master and mistress off the grounds in a carriage and pair.

But at present one might fancy the house in the early stage of a chancery suit, and that the fruit from that grand double row of walnut-trees on the right hand of the enclosure would fall and rot among the grass, if it were not that we heard the booming bark of dogs echoing from great buildings at the back. And now the half-weaned calves that have been sheltering themselves in a gorse-built hovel against the left-hand wall come out and set up a silly answer to that terrible bark, doubtless supposing that it has reference to buckets of milk.

Yes, the house must be inhabited, and we will see by whom, for imagination is a licensed trespasser ; it has no fear of dogs, but may climb over walls and peep in at windows with impunity. Put your face to one of the glass panes in the right-hand window ; what do you see ? A large open fireplace,

with rusty dogs in it, and a bare-boarded floor ; at the far end fleeces of wool stacked up ; in the middle of the floor some empty corn-bags. That is the furniture of the dining-room. And what through the left-hand window ? Several clothes-horses, a pillion, a spinning-wheel, and an old box, wide open, and stuffed full of colored rags. At the edge of this box there lies a great wooden doll, which, so far as mutilation is concerned, bears a strong resemblance to the finest Greek sculpture, and especially in the total loss of its nose. Near it there is a little chair, and the butt end of a boy's leather long-lashed whip.

The history of the house is plain now. It was once the residence of a country squire, whose family, probably dwindling down to mere spinsterhood, got merged into the more territorial name of Donnithorne. It was once the Hall ; it is now the Hall Farm. Like the life in some coast-town that was once a watering-place and is now a port, where the genteel streets are silent and grass-grown, and the docks and warehouses busy and resonant, the life at the Hall has changed its focus, and no longer radiates from the parlor, but from the kitchen and the farm-yard.

Plenty of life there ! though this is the drowsiest time of the year, just before hay-harvest ; and it is the drowsiest time of the day too, for it is close upon three by the sun, and it is half-past three by Mrs. Poyser's handsome eight-day clock. But there is always a stronger sense of life when the sun is brilliant after rain ; and now he is pouring down his beams, and making sparkles among the wet straw, and lighting up every patch of vivid green moss on the red tiles of the cow-shed, and turning even the muddy water that is hurrying along the channel to the drain into a mirror for the yellow-billed ducks, who are seizing the opportunity of getting a drink with as much body in it as possible. There is quite a concert of noises ; the great bull-dog, chained against the stables, is thrown into furious exasperation by the unwary approach of a cock too near the mouth of his kennel, and sends forth a thundering bark, which is answered by two fox-hounds shut up in the opposite cow-house ; the old top-knotted hens scratching with their chicks among the straw, set up a sympathetic croaking as the discomfited cock joins them ; a sow with her brood, all very muddy as to the legs, and curled as to the tail, throws in some deep staccato notes ; our friends the calves are bleating from the home croft ; and, under all, a fine ear discerns the continuous hum of human voices.

For the great barn-doors are thrown wide open, and men are busy there mending the harness, under the superintendence of Mr. Goby, the "whittaw," otherwise saddler, who entertains them with the latest Treddleston gossip. It is certainly rather an unfortunate day that Alick, the shepherd, has chosen for having the whittaws, since the morning turned out so wet ; and Mrs. Poyser has spoken her mind pretty strongly as to the dirt which the extra number of men's shoes brought into the house at dinner-time. Indeed she has not yet recovered her equanimity on the subject, though it is now nearly three hours since dinner, and the house-floor is perfectly clean again—as clean as everything else in that wonderful house-place, where the only chance of collecting a few grains of dust would be to climb on the salt-coffer, and put your finger on the high mantle-shelf on which the glittering brass candlesticks are enjoying their summer sinecure ; for at this time of year, of course, every one goes to bed while it is yet light, or at least light enough to discern the outline of objects after you have bruised your shins against them. Surely nowhere else could an oak clock-case and an oak table have got to such a polish by the hand ; genuine "elbow-polish," as Mrs. Poyser called it, for she thanked God she never had any of your varnished rubbish in her house. Hetty Sorrel often took the opportunity, when her aunt's back was turned, of looking at the pleasing reflection of herself in those polished surfaces, for the oak table was usually turned up like a screen, and was more for ornament than for use ; and she could see herself sometimes in the great round pewter dishes that were ranged on the shelves above the long deal dinner-table, or in the hobs of the grate, which always shone like jasper.

Everything was looking at its brightest at this moment, for the sun shone right on the pewter dishes, and from their reflecting surfaces pleasant jets of light were thrown on mellow oak and bright brass ; and on a still pleasanter object than these, for some of the rays fell on Dinah's finely-moulded cheek, and lit up her pale red hair to auburn, as she bent over the heavy household linen which she was mending for her aunt. No scene could have been more peaceful if Mrs. Poyser, who was ironing a few things that still remained from the Monday's wash, had not been making a frequent clinking with her iron, and moving to and fro whenever she wanted it to cool ; carrying the keen glance of her blue-gray eye from the kitchen to the dairy, where Hetty was making up the butter, and from the dairy to the back kitchen, where Nancy

was taking the pies out of the oven. Do not suppose, however, that Mrs. Poyser was elderly or shrewish in her appearance; she was a good-looking woman, not more than eight-and-thirty, of fair complexion and sandy hair, well-shapen, light-footed; the most conspicuous article in her attire was an ample checkered linen apron, which almost covered her skirt; and nothing could be plainer and less noticeable than her cap and gown, for there was no weakness of which she was less tolerant than feminine vanity, and the preference of ornament to utility. The family likeness between her and her niece, Dinah Morris, with the contrast between her keenness and Dinah's seraphic gentleness of expression, might have served a painter as an excellent suggestion for a Martha and Mary. Their eyes were just of the same color, but a striking test of the difference in their operation was seen in the demeanor of Trip, the black and tan terrier, whenever that much-suspected dog unwarily exposed himself to the freezing Arctic ray of Mrs. Poyser's glance. Her tongue was not less keen than her eye, and, whenever a damsel came within ear-shot, seemed to take up an unfinished lecture, as a barrel-organ takes up a tune, precisely at the point where it had left off.

The fact that it was churning-day was another reason why it was inconvenient to have the "whittaws," and why, consequently, Mrs. Poyser should scold Molly the housemaid with unusual severity. To all appearance, Molly had got through her after-dinnerwork in an exemplary manner, had "cleaned herself" with great dispatch, and now came to ask, submissively, if she should sit down to her spinning till milking-time. But this blameless conduct, according to Mrs. Poyser, shrouded a secret indulgence of unbecoming wishes, which she now dragged forth and held up to Molly's view with cutting eloquence.

"Spinning, indeed! It isn't spinning as you'd be at, I'll be bound, and let you have your own way. I never knew your equals for gallowsness. To think of a gell o' your age wanting to go an sit with half a dozen men! I'd na' been ashamed to let the words pass over my lips if I'd been you. And you, as have been here ever since last Michaelmas, and I hired you at Treddles'on stattits, without a bit o' character—as I say, you might be grateful to be hired in that way to a respectable place; and you knew no more o' what belongs to work when you come here than the mawkin i' the field. As poor a two-fisted thing as ever I saw, you know

you was. Who taught you to scrub a floor, I should like to know? Why you'd leave the dirt in heaps i' the corners—anybody 'ud think you'd never been brought up among Christians. And as for spinning, why you've wasted as much as your wage i' the flax you've spoiled learning to spin. And you've a right to feel that, and not to go about gaping and as thoughtless as if you was beholding to nobody. Comb the wool for the whittaws, indeed! That's what you'd like to be doing, is it? That's the way with you—that's the road you'd all like to go, headlongs to ruin. You're never easy till you've got some sweetheart as is as big a fool as yourself. You think you'll be finely off when you're married, I dare say, and have got a three-legged stool to sit on, and never a blanket to cover you, and a bit o' oat-cake for your dinner, as three children are a snatching at."

"I'm sure I donna want t' go wi' the whittaws," said Molly, whimpering, and quite overcome by this Dantean picture of her future, "on'y we allays used to comb the wool for'n at Mester Ottley's; an' so I just axed ye. I donna want to set eyes on the whittaws again; I wish I may never stir if I do."

"Mr. Ottley's, indeed! It's fine talking o' what you did at Mr. Ottley's. Your missis there might like her floors dirtied wi' whittaws, for what I know. There's no knowing what people *wonna* like—such ways as I've heard of! I never had a gell come into my house as seemed to know what cleaning was; I think people live like pigs, for my part. And as to that Betty as was dairy-maid at Trent's before she come to me, she'd ha' left the cheeses without turning from week's end to week's end, and the dairy thralls, I might ha' wrote my name on 'em, when I come down stairs after my illness, as the doctor said it was inflammation—it was a mercy I got well of it. And to think o' your knowing no better, Molly, and been here a-going i' nine months, and not for want o' talking to, neither—and what are you stanning there for, like a jack as is run down, instead o' getting your wheel out? You're a rare un for sitting down to your work a little while after it's time to put by."

"Munny, my iron's twite told; pease put it down to warm."

The small chirruping voice that uttered this request came from a little sunny-haired girl between three and four, who, seated on a high chair at the end of the ironing-table, was arduously clutching the handle of a miniature iron with her

tiny fat fist, and ironing rags with an assiduity that required her to put her little red tongue out as far as anatomy would allow.

"Cold, is it, my darling? Bless your sweet face!" said Mrs. Poyser, who was remarkable for the facility with which she could relapse from her official oburgatory tone to one of fondness or of friendly converse. "Never mind! Mother's done her ironing now. She's going to put the ironing things away."

"Munny, I tould 'ike to do into de barn to Tommy, to see de whittawd."

"No, no, no; Totty 'ud get her feet wet," said Mrs. Poyser, carrying away her iron. "Run into the dairy, and see Cousin Hetty make the butter."

"I tould 'ike a bit o' pum-take," rejoined Totty, who seemed to be provided with several relays of requests; at the same time, taking the opportunity of her momentary leisure to put her fingers into a bowl of starch, and drag it down so as to empty the contents with tolerable completeness on to the ironing-sheet.

"Did ever anybody see the like?" screamed Mrs. Poyser, running toward the table when her eye had fallen on the blue stream. "The child's allays i' mischief if your back's turned a minute. What shall I do to you, you naughty, naughty gell!"

Totty, however, had descended from her chair with great swiftness, and was already in retreat toward the dairy, with a sort of waddling run, and an amount of fat on the nape of her neck, which made her look like the metamorphosis of a white sucking pig.

The starch having been wiped up by Molly's help, and the ironing apparatus put by, Mrs. Poyser took up her knitting, which always lay ready at hand, and was the work she liked best, because she could carry it on automatically as she walked to and fro. But now she came and sat down opposite Dinah, whom she looked at in a meditative way, as she knitted her gray worsted stocking.

"You look th' image o' your Aunt Judith, Dinah, when you sit a-sewing. I could almost fancy it was thirty years back, and I was a little gell at home, looking at Judith as she sat at her work, after she'd done th' house up; only it was a little cottage, father's was, and not a big rambling house as gets dirty i' one corner as fast as you can clean it in another; but for all that, I could fancy you was your Aunt Judith, only her

hair was a deal darker than yours, and she was stouter and broader i' the shoulders. Judith and me allays hung together, though she had such queer ways, but your mother and her never could agree. Ah! your mother little thought as she'd have a daughter just cut out after the very pattern o' Judith, and leave her an orphan, too, for Judith to take care on, and bring up with a spoon when *she* was in the grave-yard at Stoniton. I allays said that o' Judith, as she'd bear a pound weight any day, to save anybody else carrying a ounce. And she was just the same from the first o' my remembering her; it made no difference in her, as I could see, when she took to the Methodists, only she talked a bit different, and wore a different sort o' cap; but she'd never in her life spent a penny on herself more than keeping herself decent."

"She was a blessed woman," said Dinah; "God had given her a loving, self-forgetting nature, and he perfected it by grace. And she was very fond of you too, Aunt Rachel. I've often heard her talk of you in the same sort of way. When she had that bad illness, and I was only eleven years old, she used to say, 'You'll have a friend on earth in your Aunt Rachel, if I'm taken away from you; for she has a kind heart;' and I'm sure I've found it so."

"I don't know how, child; anybody 'ud be cunning to do anything for you, I think; you're like the birds o' th' air, and live nobody knows how. I'd ha' been glad to behave to you like a mother's sister, if you'd come and live i' this country, where there's some shelter and victual for man and beast, and folks don't live on the naked hills, like poultry a-scratching on a gravel bank. And then you might get married to some decent man, and there'd be plenty ready to have you, if you'd only leave off that preaching, as is ten times worse than anything your aunt Judith ever did. And even if you'd marry Seth Bede, as is a poor wool-gathering Methodist, and's never like to have a penny beforehand, I know your uncle 'ud help you with a pig, and very like a cow, for he's allays been good natur'd to my kin, for all they're poor, and made 'em welcome to th' house; and 'ud do for you, I'll be bound, as much as ever he'd do for Hetty, though she's his own niece. And there's linen in the house as I could well spare you, for I've got lots o' sheeting, and table-clothing, and toweling, as isn't made up. There's a piece o' sheeting I could give you as that squinting Kitty spun—she was a rare girl to spin, for all she squinted, and the children couldn't abide her; and, you know, the spinning's going on constant,

and there is new linen wove twice as fast as th' old wears out. But where's the use o' talking, if you wanna be persuaded, and settle down like any other woman in her senses, i'stead o' wearing yourself out, with walking and preaching, and giving away every penny you get, so as you've nothing saved against sickness; and all the things you've got i' the world, I verily believe, 'ud go into a bundle no bigger nor a double cheese. And all because you've got notions i' your head about religion more nor what's i' the Catechism and the Prayer-book."

"But not more than what's in the Bible, aunt," said Dinah.

"Yes, and the Bible too, for that matter," Mrs. Poyser rejoined, rather sharply; "else why shouldn't them as know best what's in the Bible—the parsons and people as have got nothing to do but learn it—do the same as you do? But, for the matter o' that, if everybody was to do like you, the world must come to a stand-still; for if everybody tried to do without house and home, and with poor eating and drinking, and was allays talking as we must despise the things o' the world, as you say, I should like to know where the pick o' the stock, and the corn, and the best new milk cheeses 'ud have to go? Everybody 'ud be wanting bread made o' tail ends, and everybody 'ud be running after everybody else to preach to 'em, i'stead o' bringing up their families, and laying by against a bad harvest. It stands to sense as that can't be the right religion."

"Nay, dear aunt, you never heard me say that all people are called to forsake their work and their families. It's quite right the land should be plowed and sowed, and the precious corn stored, and the things of this life cared for, and right that people should rejoice in their families, and provide for them, so that this is done in the fear of the Lord, and that they are not unmindful of the soul's wants while they are caring for the body. We can all be servants of God wherever our lot is cast, but he gives us different sorts of work, according as he fits us for it and calls us to it. I can no more help spending my life in trying to do what I can for the souls of others, than you could help running if you heard little Totty crying at the other end of the house; the voice would go to your heart, you would think the dear child was in trouble or in danger, and you couldn't rest without running to help her and comfort her."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Poyser, rising and walking toward the door, "I know it 'ud be just the same if I was to talk to you for hours. You'd make me the same answer at the end. I

might as well talk to the running brook, and tell it to stan' still."

The causeway outside the kitchen door was dry enough now for Mrs. Poyser to stand there quite pleasantly and see what was going on in the yard, the gray worsted stocking making a steady progress in her hands all the while. But she had not been standing there more than five minutes before she came in again, and said to Dinah, in rather a flurried, awe-stricken tone.

"If there isn't Captain Donnithorne and Mr. Irwine a-coming into the yard! I'll lay my life they're coming to speak about your preaching on the Green, Dinah; it's you must answer 'em, for I'm dumb. I've said enough a'ready about your bringing such disgrace upo' your uncle's family. I wouldn't ha' minded if you'd been Mr. Poyser's own niece; folks must put up wi' their own kin as they put up wi' their own noses—it's their own flesh and blood. But to think of a niece o' mine being cause o' my husband's being turned out o' his farm, and me brought him no fortin but my savin's—"

"Nay, dear Aunt Rachel," said Dinah, gently, "you have no cause for such fears. I've strong assurance that no evil will happen to you and my uncle and the children from anything I've done. I didn't preach without direction."

"Direction! I know very well what you mean by direction," said Mrs. Poyser, knitting in a rapid and agitated manner. "When there's a bigger maggot than usual in your head you call it 'direction,' and then nothing can stir you; you look like the statty o' the outside o' Treddles'on church, a-starin' and a-smilin' whether it's fair weather or foul. I hanna common patience with you."

By this time the two gentlemen had reached the palings, and had got down from their horses: it was plain they meant to come in. Mrs. Poyser advanced to the door to meet them, curtseying low, and trembling between anger with Dinah and anxiety to conduct herself with perfect propriety on the occasion; for in those days the keenest of bucolic minds felt a whispering awe at the sight of the gentry, such as of old men felt when they stood on the tip-toe to watch the gods passing by in tall human shape.

"Well, Mrs. Poyser, how are you after this stormy morning?" said Mr. Irwine, with his stately cordiality. "Our feet are quite dry; we shall not soil your beautiful floor."

"Oh, sir, don't mention it," said Mrs. Poyser. "Will you and the captain please to walk into the parlor?"

"No, indeed, thank you, Mrs. Poyser," said the captain, looking eagerly around the kitchen, as if his eye were seeking something it could not find. "I delight in your kitchen. I think it is the most charming room I know. I should like every farmer's wife to come and look at it for a pattern."

"Oh, you're pleased to say so, sir; pray, take a seat," said Mrs. Poyser, relieved a little by this compliment and the captain's evident good-humor, but still glancing anxiously at Mr. Irwine, who, she saw, was looking at Dinah and advancing toward her.

"Poyser is not at home, is he?" said Captain Donni-thorne, seating himself where he could see along the short passage to the open dairy door.

"No, sir, he isn't; he's gone to Rosseter to see Mr. West, the factor, about the wool. But there's father i' the barn, sir, if he'd be of any use."

"No, thank you; I'll just look at the whelps, and leave a message about them with your shepherd. I must come another day and see your husband. I want to have a consultation with him about horses. Do you know when he's likely to be at liberty?"

"Why, sir, you can hardly miss him, except it's o' Tred-dles'on market-day—that's of a Friday, you know; for if he's anywhere on the farm we can send for him in a minute. If we'd got rid o' the Scantlands we should have no outlying fields; and I should be glad of it, for if ever anything happens he's sure to be gone to the Scantlands. Things allays happens so contrairy, if they've a chance; and it's an un-nat'ral thing to have one bit o' your farm in one county and all the rest in another."

"Ah! the Scantlands would go much better with Choyce's farm, especially as he wants dairy-land and you've got plenty. I think yours is the prettiest farm on the estate, though; and do you know, Mrs. Poyser, if I were going to marry and settle I should be tempted to turn you out, and do up this fine old house, and turn farmer myself."

"Oh, sir," said Mrs. Poyser, rather alarmed, "you wouldn't like it at all. As for farming, it's putting money into your pocket wi' your right hand and fetching it out wi' your left. As fur as I can see, it's raising victual for other folks, and just getting a mouthful for yourself and your children as you go along. Not as you'd be like a poor man as wants to get his bread; you could afford to lose as much money as you liked i' farming, but it's poor fun, losing money,

I should think, though I understan' it's what the great folks i' London play at more than anything. For my husband heard at market as Lord Dacey's eldest son had lost thousands upo' thousands to the Prince of Wales, and they said my lady was going to pawn her jewels to pay for them. But you know more about that than I do, sir. But as for farming, sir, I canna think as you'd like it; and this house—the draughts in it are enough to cut you through, and it's my opinion the floors up stairs are very rotten, and the rats i' the cellar are beyond anything."

"Why, that's a terrible picture, Mrs. Poyser. I think I should be doing you a service to turn you out of such a place. But there's no chance of that. I'm not likely to settle for the next twenty years, till I'm a stout gentleman of forty; and my grandfather would never consent to part with such good tenants as you."

"Well, sir, if he thinks so well of Mr. Poyser for a tenant, I wish you could put in a word for him to allow us some new gates for the Five closes, for my husband's been asking and asking till he's tired, and to think o' what he's done for the farm, and's never had a penny allowed him, be the times bad or good. And, as I've said to my husband often and often, I'm sure if the captain had anything to do with it, it wouldn't be so. Not as I wish to speak disrespectful o' them as have got the power i' their hands, but it's more than flesh and blood 'ull bear sometimes, to be toiling and striving, and up early and down late, and hardly sleeping a wink when you lie down for thinking as the cheese may swell, or the cows may slip their calf, or the wheat may grow green again i' the sheaf; and, after all, at th' end o' the year, it's like as if you'd been cooking a feast and had got the smell of it for your pains."

Mrs. Poyser, once launched into conversation, always sailed along without any check from her preliminary awe of the gentry. The confidence she felt in her own powers of exposition was a motive force that overcame all resistance.

"I'm afraid I should only do harm instead of good if I were to speak about the gates, Mrs. Poyser," said the captain, "though I assure you there's no man on the estate I would sooner say a word for than your husband. I know his farm is in better order than any other within ten miles of us; and as for the kitchen," he added, smiling, "I don't believe there's one in the kingdom to beat it. By the by, I've never seen your dairy; I must see your dairy, Mrs. Poyser."

"Indeed, sir, it is not fit for you to go in, for Hetty's in

the middle o' making the butter, for the churning was thrown late, and I'm quite ashamed." This Mrs. Poyser said blushing, and believing that the captain was really interested in her milk-pans, and would adjust his opinion of her to the appearance of her dairy.

"Oh, I've no doubt it's in capital order. Take me in," said the captain, himself leading the way, while Mrs. Poyser followed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DAIRY.

THE dairy was certainly worth looking at: it was a scene to sicken for with a sort of calenture in hot and dusty streets—such coolness, such purity, such fresh fragrance of new-pressed cheese, of firm butter, of wooden vessels perpetually bathed in pure water; such soft coloring of red earthenware and creamy surfaces, brown wood and polished tin, gray limestone and rich orange-red rust on the iron weights, and hooks, and hinges. But one gets only a confused notion of these details when they surround a distractingly pretty girl of seventeen, standing on little pattens and rounding her dimpled arm to lift a pound of butter out of the scale.

Hetty blushed a deep rose-color when Captain Donnithorne entered the dairy and spoke to her; but it was not at all a distressed blush, for it was inwreathed with smiles and dimples, and with sparkles from under long curled dark eyelashes; and while her aunt was discoursing to him about the limited amount of milk that was to be spared for butter and cheese so long as the calves were not all weaned, and the large quantity but inferior quality of milk yielded by the short-horn, which had been bought on experiment, together with other matters which must be interesting to a young gentleman who would one day be a landlord, Hetty tossed and patted her pound of butter with quite a self-possessed, coquettish air, slyly conscious that no turn of her head was lost.

There are various orders of beauty, causing men to make fools of themselves in various styles, from the desperate to the sheepish; but there is one order of beauty, which seems

made to turn the heads, not only of men, but of all intelligent mammals, even of women. It is a beauty like that of kittens, or very small downy ducks making gentle rippling noises with their soft bills, or babies just beginning to toddle and to engage in conscious mischief—a beauty with which you can never be angry, but that you feel ready to crush for inability to comprehend the state of mind into which it throws you. Hetty Sorrel's was that sort of beauty. Her aunt, Mrs. Poyser, who professed to despise all personal attractions, and intended to be the severest of mentors, continually gazed at Hetty's charms by the sly, fascinated in spite of herself; and after administering such a scolding as naturally flowed from her anxiety to do well by her husband's niece—who had no mother of her own to scold her, poor thing!—she would often confess to her husband, when they were safe out of hearing, that she firmly believed “the naughtier the little hussy behaved, the prettier she looked.”

It is of little use for me to tell you that Hetty's cheek was like a rose-petal, that dimples played about her pouting lips, that her large, dark eyes hid a soft roguishness under their long lashes, and that her curly hair, though all pushed back under her round cap while she was at work, stole back in dark, delicate rings on her forehead, and about her white, shell-like ears; it is of little use for me to say how lovely was the contour of her pink and white neckerchief, tucked into her low, plum-colored stuff bodice, or how the linen butter-making apron, with its bib, seemed a thing to be imitated in silk by duchesses, since it fell in such charming lines, or how her brown stockings and thick-soled, buckled shoes lost all that clumsiness which they must certainly have had when empty of her foot and ankle—of little use, unless you have seen a woman who affected you as Hetty affected her beholders, for otherwise, though you might conjure up the image of a lovely woman, she would not in the least resemble that distracting, kitten-like maiden. I might mention all the divine charms of a bright spring day, but if you had never in your life utterly forgotten yourself in straining your eyes after the mountain lark, or in wandering through the still lanes when the fresh-opened blossoms fill them with a sacred, silent beauty like that of fretted aisles, where would be the use of my descriptive catalogue? I could never make you know what I meant by a bright spring day. Hetty's was a spring-tide beauty; it was the beauty of young, frisking things, round-limbed, gamboling, circumventing you by a false air of inno-

cence—the innocence of a young star-browed calf, for example, that, being inclined for a promenade out of bounds, leads you a severe steeple-chase over hedge and ditch, and only comes to a stand in the middle of a bog.

And they are the prettiest attitudes and movements into which a pretty girl is thrown in making up butter—tossing movements that give a charming curve to the arm, and a sideward inclination of the round white neck; little patting and rolling movements with the palm of the hand, and nice adaptations and finishings, which cannot at all be effected without a great play of pouting mouth and the dark eyes. And then the butter itself seems to communicate a fresh charm; it is so pure, so sweet-scented; it is turned off the mould with such a beautiful, firm surface, like marble in a pale yellow light! Moreover, Hetty was particularly clever at making up the butter; it was the one performance of hers that her aunt allowed to pass without severe criticism; so she handled it with all the grace that belongs to mastery.

“I hope you will be ready for a great holiday on the thirtieth of July, Mrs. Poyser,” said Captain Donnithorne, when he had sufficiently admired the dairy, and given several improvised opinions on Swede turnips and short-horns. “You know what is to happen then, and I shall expect you to be one of the guests who come earliest and leave latest. Will you promise me your hand for two dances, Miss Hetty? If I don’t get your promise now, I know I shall hardly have a chance, for all the smart young farmers will take care to secure you.”

Hetty smiled and blushed, but before she could answer, Mrs. Poyser interposed, scandalized at the mere suggestion that the young squire could be excluded by any meaner partners.

“Indeed, sir, you’re very kind to take that notice of her. And I’m sure whenever you’re pleased to dance with her she’ll be proud and thankful, if she stood still all the rest o’ the evening.”

“Oh no, no, that would be too cruel to all the other young fellows who can dance. But you will promise me two dances, won’t you?” the captain continued, determined to make Hetty look at him and speak to him.

Hetty dropped the prettiest little curtsey, and stole a half-shy, half-coquettish glance at him as she said,

“Yes, thank you, sir.”

“And you must bring all your children, you know, Mrs.

Poyser ; your little Totty, as well as the boys. I want all the youngest children on the estate to be there—all those who will be fine young men and women when I'm a bald old fellow."

"Oh, dear sir, that 'ull be a long time first," said Mrs. Poyser, quite overcome at the young squire's speaking so lightly of himself, and thinking how her husband would be interested in hearing her recount this remarkable specimen of high-born humor. The captain was thought to be "very full of his jokes," and was a great favorite throughout the estate on account of his free manners. Every tenant was quite sure things would be different when the reins got into his hands—there was to be a millennial abundance of new gates, allowances of lime, and returns of ten per cent.

"But where *is* Totty to-day?" he said. "I want to see her."

"Where is the little un, Hetty?" said Mrs. Poyser. "She came in here not long ago."

"I don't know. She went into the brewhouse to Nancy, I think."

The proud mother, unable to resist the temptation to show her Totty, passed at once into the back kitchen, in search of her, not, however, without misgivings lest something should have happened to render her person and attire unfit for presentation.

"And do you carry the butter to market when you've made it?" said the captain to Hetty, meanwhile.

"Oh no, sir; not when it's so heavy; I'm not strong enough to carry it. Alick takes it on horseback."

"No, I'm sure your pretty arms were never meant for such heavy weights. But you go out a walk sometimes these pleasant evenings, don't you? Why don't you have a walk in the Chase sometimes, now it's so green and pleasant? I hardly ever see you anywhere except at home and at Church."

"Aunt doesn't like me to go a-walking only when I'm going somewhere," said Hetty. "But I go through the Chase sometimes."

"And don't you ever go to see Mrs. Best, the housekeeper? I think I saw you once in the housekeeper's room."

"It isn't Mrs. Best, it's Mrs. Pomfret, the lady's maid, as I go to see. She's teaching me tent-stitch and the lace-mending. I'm going to tea with her to-morrow afternoon."

The reason why there had been space for this *tête-à-tête* can only be known by looking into the back kitchen, where

Totty nad been discovered rubbing a stray blue-bag against her nose, and in the same moment allowing some liberal indigo drops to fall on her afternoon pinafore. But now she appeared holding her mother's hand—the end of her round nose rather shiny from a recent and hurried application of soap and water.

"Here she is!" said the captain, lifting her up and setting her on the low stone shelf. "Here's Totty! By the by, what's her other name? She wasn't christened Totty."

"Oh, sir, we call her sadly out of her name. Charlotte's her christened name. It's a name i' Mr. Poyser's family; his grandmother was named Charlotte. But we began with calling her Lotty, and now it's got to Totty. To be sure it's more like a name for a dog than a Christian child."

"Totty's a capital name. Why, she looks like a Totty. Has she got a pocket on?" said the captain, feeling in his own waistcoat pockets.

Totty immediately with great gravity lifted up her frock, and showed a tiny pink pocket at present in a state of collapse.

"It dot notin in it," she said, as she looked down at it very earnestly.

"No! what a pity! such a pretty pocket. Well, I think I've got some things in mine that will make a pretty jingle in it. Yes! I declare I've got five little round silver things, and hear what a pretty noise they make in Totty's pink pocket." Here he shook the pocket with the five sixpences in it, and Totty showed her teeth and wrinkled her nose in great glee; but divining that there was nothing more to be got by staying, she jumped off the shelf and ran away to jingle her pocket in the hearing of Nancy, while her mother called after her, "Oh, for shame, you naughty gell! not to thank the captain for what he's given you. I'm sure, sir, it's very kind of you; but she's spoiled shameful; her father won't have her said nay in any thing, and there's no managing her. It's being the youngest, and th' only gell."

"Oh, she's a funny little fatty; I wouldn't have her different. But I must be going now, for I suppose the rector is waiting for me."

With a "good-by," a bright glance, and a bow to Hetty, Arthur left the dairy. But he was mistaken in imaging himself waited for. The rector had been so much interested in his conversation with Dinah, that he would not have chosen to close it earlier; and you shall hear now what they had been saying to each other.

CHAPTER VIII.

A VOCATION.

DINAH, who had risen when the gentlemen came in, but still kept hold of the sheet she was mending, curtsied respectfully when she saw Mr. Irwine looking at her and advancing toward her. He had never yet spoken to her, or stood face to face with her, and her first thought, as her eyes met his, was, "What a well-favored countenance! Oh that the good seed might fall on that soil, for it would surely flourish." The agreeable impression must have been mutual, for Mr. Irwine bowed to her with a benignant deference, which would have been equally in place if she had been the most dignified lady of his acquaintance.

"You are only a visitor in this neighborhood, I think?" were his first words, as he seated himself opposite to her.

"No, sir, I come from Snowfield, in Stonyshire. But my aunt was very kind, wanting me to have rest from my work there, because I'd been ill, and she invited me to come and stay with her for a while."

"Ah! I remember Snowfield very well; I once had occasion to go there. It's a dreary, bleak place. They were building a cotton-mill there; but that's many years ago now; I suppose the place is a good deal changed by the employment that mill must have brought."

"It *is* changed so far as the mill has brought people there, who get a livelihood for themselves by working in it, and make it better for the tradesfolks. I work in it myself, and have reason to be grateful, for thereby I have enough and to spare. But it's still a bleak place, as you say, sir—very different from this country."

"You have relations living there probably, so that you are attached to the place as your home?"

"I had an aunt there once; she brought me up, for I was an orphan. But she was taken away seven years ago, and I

have no other kindred that I know of, besides my aunt Poyser, who is very good to me, and would have me come and live in this country, which to be sure is a good land, wherein they eat bread without scarceness. But I'm not free to leave Snowfield, where I was first planted, and have grown deep into it, like the small grass on the hill-top."

"Ah! I dare say you have many religious friends and companions there; you are a Methodist—a Wesleyan, I think?"

"Yes, my aunt at Snowfield belonged to the Society, and I have cause to be thankful for the privileges I have had thereby from my earliest childhood."

"And have you been long in the habit of preaching?—for I understand you preached at Hayslope last night."

"I first took to the work four years since, when I was twenty-one."

"Your Society sanctions women's preaching, then?"

"It doesn't forbid them, sir, when they've a clear call the work, and when their ministry is owned by the conversion of sinners and the strengthening of God's people. Mrs. Fletcher, as you may have heard about, was the first woman to preach in the Society, I believe, before she was married, when she was Miss Bosanquet; and Mr. Wesley approved of her undertaking the work. She had a great gift, and there are many others now living who are precious fellow-helpers in the work of the ministry. I understand there's been voices raised against it in the Society of late, but I cannot but think their counsel will come to naught. It isn't for men to make channels for God's Spirit, as they make channels for the water-courses, and say, 'Flow here, but flow not there.'"

"But don't you find some danger among your people—I don't mean to say that it is so with you, far from it—but don't you find sometimes that both men and women fancy themselves channels for God's Spirit and are quite mistaken, so that they set about a work for which they are unfit, and bring holy things into contempt?"

"Doubtless it is so sometimes, for there have been evil-doers among us who have sought to deceive the brethren, and some there are who deceive their own selves. But we are not without discipline and correction to put a check upon these things. There's a very strict order kept among us, and the brethren and sisters watch for each other's souls as they that must give account. They don't go every one his own way and say, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'"

"But tell me—if I may ask, and I am really interested in knowing it—how you first came to think of preaching?"

"Indeed, sir, I didn't think of it at all—I'd been used from the time I was sixteen to talk to the little children and teach them. and sometimes I had had my heart enlarged to speak in class, and was much drawn out in prayer with the sick. But I had felt no call to preach; for, when I'm not greatly wrought upon, I'm too much given to sit still and keep by myself; it seems as if I could sit silent all day long with the thought of God overflowing my soul—as the pebbles lie bathed in the Willow Brook. For thoughts are so great—aren't they, sir? They seem to lie upon us like a deep flood; and it's my besetment to forget where I am and every thing about me, and lose myself in thoughts that I could give no account of, for I could neither make a beginning nor ending of them in words. That was my way as long as I can remember: but sometimes it seemed as if speech came to me without any will of my own, and words were given to me that came out as the tears come, because our hearts are full and we can't help it. And those were always times of great blessing, though I had never thought it could be so with me before a congregation of people. But, sir, we are led on, like the little children, by a way that we know not. I was called to preach quite suddenly, and since then I have never been left in doubt about the work that was laid upon me."

"But tell me the circumstances—just how it was, the very day you began to preach."

"It was one Sunday I walked with Brother Marlowe, who was an aged man, one of the local preachers, all the way to Hetton-Deeps—that's a village where the people get their living by working in the lead mines, and where there's no church nor preacher, but they live like sheep without a shepherd. It's better than twelve miles from Snowfield, so we set out early in the morning, for it was summer time; and I had a wonderful sense of the Divine love as we walked over the hills, where there's no trees, you know, sir, as there is here, to make the sky look smaller, but you see the heavens stretched out like a tent, and you feel the everlasting arms around you. But, before we got to Hetton, Brother Marlowe was seized with a dizziness that made him afraid of falling, for he overworked himself sadly at his years, in watching and praying, and walking so many miles to speak the Word, as well as carrying on his trade of linen-weaving. And when we got to the village the people were expecting him, for he'd appointed the time

and the place when he was there before, and such of them as cared to hear the Word of Life were assembled on a spot where the cottages was thickest, so as others might be drawn to come. But he felt as he couldn't stand up to preach, and he was forced to lie down in the first of the cottages we came to. So I went to tell the people, thinking we'd go into one of the houses, and I would read and pray with them. But as I passed along by the cottages and saw the aged trembling women at the doors, and the hard looks of the men, who seemed to have their eyes no more filled with the sight of the Sabbath morning than if they had been dumb oxen that never looked up to the sky, I felt a great movement in my soul, and I trembled as if I was shaken by a strong spirit entering into my weak body. And I went to where the little flock of people was gathered together, and stepped on the low wall that was built against the green hill-side, and I spoke the words that were given to me abundantly. And they all came round me out of all the cottages, and many wept over their sins and have since been joined to the Lord. This was the beginning of my preaching, sir, and I've preached ever since."

Dinah had let her work fall during this narrative, which she uttered in her usual simple way, but with that sincere, articulate, thrilling treble, by which she always mastered her audience. She stooped now to gather up her sewing, and then went on with it as before. Mr. Irwine was deeply interested. He said to himself, "He must be a miserable prig who would act the pedagogue here ; one might as well go and lecture the trees for growing in their own shape."

"And you never feel any embarrassment from the sense of your youth—that you are a lovely young woman on whom men's eyes are fixed?" he said aloud.

"No, I've no room for such feelings, and I don't believe the people ever take notice about that. I think, sir, when God makes his presence felt through us, we are like the burning bush : Moses never took any heed what sort of bush it was—he only saw the brightness of the Lord. I've preached to as rough ignorant people as can be in the villages about Snowfield—men that look very hard and wild ; but they never said an uncivil word to me, and often thanked me kindly as they made way for me to pass through the midst of them."

"*That* I can believe—that I can well believe," said Mr. Irwine, emphatically. "And what did you think of your hearers last night, now? Did you find them quiet and attentive?"

"Very quiet, sir; but I saw no signs of any greater work upon them, except in a young girl named Bessy Cranage, toward whom my heart yearned greatly, when my eyes first fell on her blooming youth given up to folly and vanity. I had some private talk and prayer with her afterward, and I trust her heart is touched. But I've noticed, that in these villages where the people lead a quiet life among the green pastures and the still waters, tilling the ground and tending the cattle, there's a strange deadness to the Word, as different as can be from the great towns, like Leeds, where I once went to visit a holy woman who preaches there. It's wonderful how rich is the harvest of souls up those high-walled streets, where you seem to walk as in a prison yard, and the ear is deafened with the sounds of worldly toil. I think maybe it is because the promise is sweeter when this life is so dark and weary, and the soul gets more hungry when the body is ill at ease."

"Why, yes, our farm-laborers are not easily roused. They take life almost as slowly as the sheep and cows. But we have some intelligent workmen about here. I dare say you know the Bedes; Seth Bede, by the by, is a Methodist."

"Yes, I know Seth well, and his brother Adam a little. Seth is a gracious young man—sincere and without offence; and Adam is like the patriarch Joseph, for his great skill and knowledge, and the kindness he shows to his brother and his parents."

"Perhaps you don't know the trouble that has just happened to them? Their father, Matthias Bede, was drowned in the Willow Brook last night, not far from his own door. I'm going now to see Adam."

"Ah! their poor aged mother!" said Dinah, dropping her hands and looking before her with pitying eyes, as if she saw the object of her sympathy. "She will mourn heavily; for Seth has told me she's of an anxious, troubled heart. I must go and see if I can give her any help."

As she rose and was beginning to fold up her work, Captain Donnithorne, having exhausted all plausible pretexts for remaining among the milk-pans, came out of the dairy, followed by Mrs. Poyser. Mr. Irwine now rose also, and, advancing toward Dinah, held out his hand, and said,

"Good-by. I hear you are going away soon; but this will not be the last visit you will pay your aunt—so we shall meet again, I hope."

His cordiality toward Dinah set all Mrs. Poyser's anxie-

ties at rest, and her face was brighter than usual, as she said, "I've never asked after Mrs. Irwine and the Miss Irwines, sir; I hope they are as well as usual."

"Yes, thank you, Mrs. Poyser, except that Miss Anne has one of her bad headaches to-day. By the by, we all liked that nice cream cheese you sent us—my mother especially."

"I'm very glad, indeed, sir. It is but seldom I make one, but I remembered Mrs. Irwine was fond of 'em. Please to give my duty to her, and to Miss Kate and Miss Anne. They've never been to look at my poultry this long while, and I've got some beautiful speckled chickens black and white, as Miss Kate might like to have some of among hers."

"Well, I'll tell her; she must come and see them. Good-by," said the rector, mounting his horse.

"Just ride slowly on, Irwine," said Captain Donnithorne, mounting also. "I'll overtake you in three minutes. I'm only going to speak to the shepherd about the whelps. Good-by, Mrs. Poyser; tell your husband I shall come and have a long talk with him soon."

Mrs. Poyser curtsied duly, and watched the two horses until they had disappeared from the yard, amid great excitement on the part of the pigs and the poultry, and under the furious indignation of the bull-dog, who performed a Pyrrhic dance, that every moment seemed to threaten the breaking of his chain. Mrs. Poyser delighted in this noisy exit; it was a fresh assurance to her that the farm-yard was well guarded, and that no loiterers could enter unobserved; and it was not until the gate had closed behind the captain that she turned into the kitchen again, where Dinah stood with her bonnet in her hand, waiting to speak to her aunt before she set out for Lisbeth Bede's cottage.

Mrs. Poyser, however, though she noticed the bonnet, deferred remarking on it until she had disburdened herself of her surprise at Mr. Irwine's behavior.

"Why, Mr. Irwine wasn't angry, then? What did he say to you, Dinah? Didn't he scold you for preaching?"

"No, he was not at all angry. He was very friendly to me. I was quite drawn out to speak to him; I hardly know how, for I had always thought of him as a worldly Sadducee. But his countenance is as pleasant as the morning sunshine."

"Pleasant! and what else did y' expect to find him but pleasant?" said Mrs. Poyser, impatiently, resuming her knitting. "I should think his countenance *is* pleasant indeed! and him a gentleman born, and's got a mother like a picter,

You may go the country round and not find such another woman turned sixty-six. It's summat-like to see such a man as that i' the desk of a Sunday ! As I say to Poyser, it's like looking at a full crop o' wheat, or a pasture with a fine dairy o' cows in it ; it makes you think the world's comfortable-like. But as for such creatures as you Methodisses run after, I'd as soon go to look at a lot o' bare-ribbed runts on a common. Fine folks they are to tell you what's right, as look as if they'd never tasted nothing better than bacon-sword and sour-cake i' their lives. But what did Mr. Irwine say to you about that fool's trick o' preaching on the Green ? ”

“ He only said he'd heard of it ; he didn't seem to feel any displeasure about it. But, dear aunt, don't think any more about that. He told me something that I'm sure will cause you sorrow, as it does me. Thias Bede was drowned last night in the Willow Brook, and I'm thinking that the aged mother will be greatly in need of comfort. Perhaps I can be of use to her, so I have fetched my bonnet and am going to set out.”

“ Dear heart ! dear heart ! But you must have a cup o' tea first, child,” said Mrs. Poyser, falling at once from the key of B with five sharps to the frank and genial C. “ The kettle's boiling—we'll have it ready in a minute ; and the young uns'll be in and wanting theirs directly. I'm quite willing you should go and see th' old woman, for you're one as is allays welcome in trouble, Methodist or no Methodist ; but for the matter o' that, it's the flesh and blood folks are made on as makes the difference. Some cheeses are made o' skimmed milk and some o' new milk, and it's no matter what you call 'em, you may tell which is which by the look and the smell. But as to Thias Bede, he's better out o' the way nor in—God forgi' me for saying so—for he's done little this ten year but make trouble for them as belonged to him ; and I think it 'ud be well for you to take a little bottle o' rum for th' old woman, for I dare say she's got never a drop o' nothing to comfort her inside. Sit down, child, and be easy, for you sha'n't stir out till you've had a cup o' tea, and so I tell you.”

During the latter part of this speech, Mrs. Poyser had been reaching down the tea-things from the shelves, and was on her way toward the pantry for the loaf, followed close by Totty, who had made her appearance on the rattling of the tea-cups, when Hetty came out of the dairy relieving her tired arms by lifting them up, and clasping her hands at the back of her head.

"Molly," she said, rather languidly, "just run out and get me a bunch of dock-leaves ; the butter's ready to pack up now."

"D' you hear what's happened, Hetty ?" said her aunt.

"No ; how should I hear anything ?" was the answer, in a pettish tone.

"Not as you'd care much, I dare say, if you did hear ; for you're too feather-headed to mind if every body was dead, so as you could stay up stairs a-dressing yourself for two hours by the clock. But any body besides yourself 'ud mind about such things happening to them as think a deal more of you than you deserve. But Adam Bede, and all his kin might be drowned for what you'd care—you'd be perking at the glass the next minute."

"Adam Bede—drowned ?" said Hetty, letting her arms fall, and looking rather bewildered, but suspecting that her aunt was, as usual, exaggerating with a didactic purpose.

"No, my dear, no," said Dinah, kindly, for Mrs. Poyser had passed on to the pantry without deigning more precise information. "Not Adam. Adam's father, the old man, is drowned. He was drowned last night in the Willow Brook. Mr. Irwine has just told me about it."

"Oh, how dreadful !" said Hetty, looking serious, but not deeply affected ; and as Molly now entered with the dock-leaves, she took them silently and returned to the dairy without asking farther questions.

CHAPTER IX.

HETTY'S WORLD.

WHILE she adjusted the broad leaves that set off the pale fragrant butter as the primrose is set off by its nest of green, I am afraid Hetty was thinking a great deal more of the looks Captain Donnithorne had cast at her than of Adam and his troubles. Bright, admiring glances from a handsome young gentleman, with white hands, a gold chain, occasional regimentals, and wealth and grandeur immeasurable—those were the warm rays that set poor Hetty's heart vibrating, and playing its little foolish tunes over and over again. We do not

hear that Memnon's statue gave forth its melody at all under the rushing of the mightiest wind, or in response to any other influence, divine or human, than certain short-lived sunbeams of morning ; and we must learn to accommodate ourselves to the discovery that some of those cunningly-fashioned instruments called human souls have only a very limited range of music, and will not vibrate in the least under a touch than fills others with tremulous rapture or quivering agony.

Hetty was quite used to the thought that people liked to look at her. She was not blind to the fact that young Luke Britton of Broxton came to Hayslope church on a Sunday afternoon on purpose that he might see her ; and that he would have made much more decided advances if her uncle Poyser, thinking but lightly of a young man whose father's land was so foul as old Luke Britton's, had not forbidden her aunt to encourage him by any civilities. She was aware, too, that Mr. Craig, the gardener at the Chase, was over head and ears in love with her, and had lately made unmistakable avowals in luscious strawberries and hyperbolical peas. She knew still better that Adam Bede—tall, upright clever, brave Adam Bede—who carried such authority with all the people round about, and whom her uncle was always delighted to see of an evening, saying that “ Adam knew a fine sight more o' the natur' o' things than those as thought themselves his betters ”—she knew that this Adam, who was often rather stern to other people, and not much given to run after the lasses, could be made to turn pale or red any day by a word or a look from her. Hetty's sphere of comparison was not large, but she couldn't help perceiving that Adam was “ something like ” a man ; always knew what to say about things ; could tell her uncle how to prop the hovel, and had mended the churn in no time ; knew, with only looking at it, the value of the chestnut-tree that was blown down, and why the damp came in the walls, and what they must do to stop the rats ; and wrote a beautiful hand that you could read off, and could do figures in his head—a degree of accomplishment totally unknown among the richest farmers of that country-side. Not at all like that slouching Luke Britton, who, when she once walked with him all the way from Broxton to Hayslope, had only broken silence to remark that the gray goose had begun to lay. And as for Mr. Craig, the gardener, he was a sensible man enough, to be sure, but he was knock-kneed, and had a queer sort of sing-song in his talk ; moreover, on the most charitable supposition, he must be far on the way to forty.

Hetty was quite certain her uncle wanted her to encourage Adam, and would be pleased for her to marry him. For those were times when there was no rigid demarkation of rank between the farmer and the respectable artisan ; and on the home-hearth, as well as in the public house, they might be seen taking their jug of ale together, the farmer having a latent sense of capital, and of weight in parish affairs, which sustained him under his conspicuous inferiority in conversation. Martin Poyser was not a frequenter of public houses, but he liked a friendly chat over his own home-brewed ; and though it was pleasant to lay down the law to a stupid neighbor who had no notion how to make the best of his farm, it was also an agreeable variety to learn something from a clever fellow like Adam Bede. Accordingly, for the last three years—ever since he had superintended the building of the new barn—Adam had always been made welcome at the Hall Farm, especially of a winter evening, when the whole family, in patriarchal fashion, master and mistress, children and servants, were assembled in that glorious kitchen, at well graduated distances from the blazing fire. And for the last two years at least Hetty had been in the habit of hearing her uncle say, “ Adam Bede may be working for wage now, but he’ll be a master-man some day, as sure as I sit in this chair. Mester Burge is in the right on’t to want him to go partners and marry his daughter, if it’s true what they say ; the woman as marries him ’ull have a good take, be’t Lady-day or Michaelmas ”—a remark which Mrs. Poyser always followed up with her cordial assent. “ Ah ! ” she would say, “ it’s all very fine having a ready-made rich man, but may happen he’ll be a ready-made fool ; and it’s no use filling your pocket o’ money if you’ve got a hole in the corner. It’ll do you no good to sit in a spring-cart o’ your own if you’ve got a soft to drive you ; he’ll soon turn you over into the ditch. I allays said I’d never marry a man as had got brains ; for where’s the use of a woman having brains of her own if she’s tackled to a geck as everybody’s a-laughing at ? She might as well dress herself fine to sit back’ard on a donkey.”

These expressions, though figurative, sufficiently indicated the bent of Mrs. Poyser’s mind with regard to Adam : and though she and her husband might have viewed the subject differently if Hetty had been a daughter of their own, it was clear that they would have welcomed the match with Adam for a penniless niece. For what could Hetty have been but a servant elsewhere, if her uncle had not taken her in and brought her up as a domestic help to her aunt, whose health

since the birth of Totty had not been equal to more positive labor than the superintendence of servants and children? But Hetty had never given Adam any steady encouragement. Even in the moments when she was most thoroughly conscious of his superiority to her other admirers, she had never brought herself to think of accepting him. She liked to feel that this strong, skilful, keen-eyed man was in her power, and would have been indignant if he had shown the least sign of slipping from under the yoke of her coquettish tyranny, and attaching himself to the gentle Mary Burge, who would have been grateful enough for the most trifling notice from him, "Mary Burge, indeed! such a sallow-faced girl; if she put on a bit of pink ribbon, she looked as yellow as a crow-flower, and her hair was as straight as a hank of cotton." And always when Adam staid away for several weeks from the Hall Farm, and otherwise make same show of resistance to his passion as a foolish one, Hetty took care to entice him back into the net by little airs of meekness and timidity, as if she were in trouble at his neglect. But as to marrying Adam, that was a very different affair! There was nothing in the world to tempt her to do that. Her cheeks never grew a shade deeper when his name was mentioned; she felt no thrill when she saw him passing along the causeway by the window, or advancing toward her unexpectedly in the footpath across the meadow; she felt nothing when his eyes rested on her but the cold triumph of knowing that he loved her and would not care to look at Mary Burge. He could no more stir in her the emotions that make the sweet intoxication of young love, than the mere picture of a sun can stir the spring sap in the subtle fibres of the plant. She saw him as he was, a poor man, with old parents to keep, who would not be able, for a long while to come, to give her even such luxuries as she shared in her uncle's house. And Hetty's dreams were all luxuries: to sit in a carpeted parlor, and always wear white stockings; to have some large, beautiful earrings, such as were all the fashion; to have Nottingham lace round the top of her gown, and something to make her handkerchief smell nice, like Miss Lydia Donni-thorne's when she drew it out at church; and not to be obliged to get up early or be scolded by anybody. She thought, if Adam had been rich and could have given her these things, she loved him well enough to marry him.

But for the last few weeks a new influence had come over Hetty, vague, atmospheric, shaping itself into no self-confessed hopes or prospects, but producing a pleasant narcotic effect,

making her tread the ground and go about her work in a sort of dream, unconscious of weight or effort, and showing her all things through a soft, liquid veil, as if she were living not in this solid world of brick and stone, but in a beatified world, such as the sun lights up for us in the waters. Hetty had become aware that Mr. Arthur Donnithorne would take a good deal of trouble for the chance of seeing her; that he always placed himself at church so as to have the fullest view of her both sitting and standing; that he was constantly finding reasons for calling at the Hall Farm, and always would contrive to say something for the sake of making her speak to him and look at him. The poor child no more conceived at present the idea that the young squire could ever be her lover, than a baker's pretty daughter in the crowd, whom a young emperor distinguishes by an imperial but admiring smile, conceives that she shall made empress. But the baker's daughter goes home and dreams of the handsome young emperor, and perhaps weighs the flour amiss while she is thinking what a heavenly lot it must be to have him for a husband: and so poor Hetty had got a face and a presence haunting her waking and sleeping dreams; bright, soft glances had penetrated her, and suffused her life with a strange, happy languor. The eyes that shed those glances were really not half so fine as Adam's which sometimes look at her with a sad, beseeching tenderness: but they had found a ready medium in Hetty's little silly imagination, whereas Adam's could get no entrance through that atmosphere. For three weeks, at least, her inward life had consisted of little else than living through in memory the looks and words Arthur had directed toward her—of little else than recalling the sensations with which she heard his voice outside the door, and saw him enter, and became conscious that his eyes were fixed on her, and then became conscious than a tall figure, looking down on her with eyes that seemed to touch her, was coming nearer in clothes of beautiful texture, with an order like that of a flower-garden borne on the evening breeze. Foolish thoughts, you see; having nothing at all to do with the love felt by sweet girls of eighteen in our days; but all this happened, you must remember, nearly sixty years ago, and Hetty was quite uneducated—a simple farmer's girl, to whom a gentlemen with a white hand was dazzling as an Olympian god. Until to-day she had never looked farther into the future than to the next time Captain Donnithorne would come to the Farm, or the next Sunday when she should see him at church; but now she thought perhaps he would try to meet

her when she went to the Chase to-morrow—and if he should speak to her, and walk a little way, when nobody was by! That had never happened yet; and now her imagination, instead of retracing the past, was busy fashioning what would happen to-morrow—whereabout in the Chase she should see him coming toward her, how she should put her new rose-colored ribbon on which he had never seen, and what he would say to her to make her return his glances—a glance which she would be living through in her memory, over and over again, all the rest of the day.

In this state of mind how could Hetty give any feeling to Adam's troubles, or think much about poor old Thias being drowned? Young souls, in such pleasant delirium as hers, are as unsympathetic as butterflies sipping nectar; they are isolated from all appeals by a barrier of dreams—by invisible looks and impalpable arms.

While Hetty's hands were busy packing up the butter, and her head filled with these pictures of the morrow, Arthur Donithorne, riding by Mr. Irwine's side toward the valley of the Willow Brook, had also certain indistinct anticipations, running as an under-current in his mind while he was listening to Mr. Irwine's account of Dinah; indistinct, yet strong enough to make him feel rather conscious when Mr. Irwine suddenly said,

"What fascinated you so in Mrs. Poyser's dairy, Arthur? Have you become an amateur of damp quarries and skimming-dishes?"

Arthur knew the rector too well to suppose that a clever invention would be of any use, so he said, with his accustomed frankness,

"No, I went to look at the pretty butter-maker, Hetty Sorrel. She's a perfect Hebe; and if I were an artist I would paint her. It's amazing what pretty girls one sees among the farmers' daughters, when the men are such clowns. That common round red face one sees sometimes in the men—all cheek and no features, like Martin Poyser's—comes out in the women of the family as the most charming phiz imaginable."

"Well, I have no objection to your contemplating Hetty in an artistic light, but I must not have you feeding her vanity, and filling her little noddle with the notion that she's a great beauty, attractive to fine gentlemen, or you will spoil her for a poor man's wife—honest Craig's, for example, whom I have seen bestowing soft glances on her. The little puss seems already to have airs enough to make a husband as

miserable as it's a law of nature for a quiet man to be when he marries a beauty. Apropos of marrying, I hope our friend Adam will get settled, now the poor old man's gone. He will only have his mother to keep in future, and I've a notion that there's a kindness between him and that nice modest girl, Mary Burge, from something that fell from old Jonathan one day when I was talking to him. But when I mentioned the subject to Adam he looked uneasy, and turned the conversation. I suppose the love-making doesn't run smooth, or perhaps Adam hangs back till he's in a better position. He has independence of spirit enough for two men—rather an excess of pride, if anything."

"That would be a capital match for Adam. He would slip into old Burge's shoes, and make a fine thing of that building business, I'll answer for him. I should like to see him well settled in this parish; he would be ready, then, to act as my grand-vizier when I wanted one. We could plan no end of repairs and improvements together. I've never seen the girl, though, I think—at least I've never looked at her."

"Look at her next Sunday at church—she sits with her father on the left of the reading-desk. You needn't look quite so much at Hetty Sorrel then. When I've made up my mind that I can't afford to buy a tempting dog, I take no notice of him, because if he took a strong fancy to me and looked lovingly at me, the struggle between arithmetic and inclination might become unpleasantly severe. I pique myself on my wisdom there, Arthur, and, as an old fellow to whom wisdom has become cheap, I can bestow it upon you."

"Thank you. It may stand me in a good stead some day, though I don't know that I have any present use for it. Bless me! how the brook has overflowed. Suppose we have a canter now we're at the bottom of the hill."

That is the great advantage of dialogue on horseback; it can be merged any minute into a trot or a canter, and one might have escaped from Socrates himself in the saddle. The two friends were free from the necessity of farther conversation till they pulled up in the lane behind Adam's cottage.

CHAPTER X

DINAH VISITS LISBETH.

AT five o'clock Lisbeth came down stairs with a large key in her hand ; it was the key of the chamber where her husband lay dead. Throughout the day, except in her occasional outburst of wailing grief, she had been in incessant movement, performing the initial duties to her dead with the awe and exactitude that belongs to religious rites. She had brought out her little store of bleached linen, which she had for long years kept in reserve for this supreme use. It seemed but yesterday—that time so many midsummers ago, when she had told Thias where this linen lay, that he might be sure and reach it out for her when *she* died, for she was the elder of the two. Then there had been the work of cleansing to the strictest purity every object in the sacred chamber, and of removing from it every trace of common daily occupation. The small window which had hitherto freely let in the frosty moonlight or the warm summer sunrise on the working man's slumber, must now be darkened with a fair white sheet, for this was the sleep which is as sacred under the bare rafters as in ceiled houses. Lisbeth had even mended a long-neglected and unnoticeable rent in the checkered bit of bed curtain ; for the moments were few and precious now in which she would be able to do the smallest office of respect or love for the still corpse ; to which in all her thoughts she attributed some consciousness. Our dead are never dead to us until we have forgotten them ; they can be injured by us, they can be wounded ; they know all our penitence, all our aching sense that their place is empty ; all the kisses we bestow on the smallest relic of their presence. And the aged peasant woman most of all believes that her dead are conscious. Decent burial was what Lisbeth had been thinking of for herself through years of thrift, with an indistinct expectation that she should know when she was being carried to the church-yard, followed by her husband and her sons ; and now she felt as if the greatest work of her life were to be done in seeing that Thias was decently buried before her—under the white thorn, where once in a dream she had thought she lay in the coffin, yet all the while saw the sunshine above, and smelt the white

blossoms that were so thick upon the thorn the Sunday she went to be churched after Adam was born.

But now she had done everything that could be done to-day in the chamber of death—had done it all herself, with some aid from her sons in lifting, for she would let no one be fetched to help her from the village, not being fond of female neighbors generally; and her favorite Dolly, the old house-keeper at Mr. Burge's, who had come to condole with her in the morning as soon as she heard of Thias's death was too dim-sighted to be of much use. She had locked the door, and now held the key in her hand, as she drew herself wearily into a chair that stood out of its place in the middle of the house floor, where in ordinary times she would never have consented to sit. The kitchen had had none of her attention that day; it was soiled with the tread of muddy shoes, and untidy with clothes and other objects out of place. But what at another time would have been intolerable to Lisbeth's habits of order and cleanliness, seemed to her now just what should be; it was right that things should look strange, and disordered, and wretched, now the old man had come to his end in that sad way; the kitchen ought not to look as if nothing had happened. Adam, overcome with the agitations and exertions of the day, after his night of hard work, had fallen asleep on a bench in the workshop; and Seth was in the back kitchen, making a fire of sticks, that he might get the kettle to boil, and persuade his mother to have a cup of tea, an indulgence which she rarely allowed herself.

There was no one in the kitchen when Lisbeth entered and threw herself into the chair. She looked round with blank eyes at the dirt and confusion on which the bright afternoon sun shone dismally; it was all of a piece with the sad confusion of her mind—that confusion which belongs to the first hours of a sudden sorrow, when the poor human soul is like one who has been deposited sleeping among the ruins of a vast city, and wakes up in dreary amazement, not knowing whether it is the growing or the dying day—not knowing why and whence came this illimitable scene of desolation, or why he too finds himself desolate in the midst of it.

At another time, Lisbeth's first thought would have been, "Where is Adam?" but the sudden death of her husband had restored him in these hours to that first place in her affections which he had held six-and-twenty years before; she had forgotten his faults as we forget the sorrows of our departed childhood, and thought of nothing but the young husband's

kindness and the old man's patience. Her eyes continued to wander blankly until Seth came in and began to remove some of the scattered things, and clear the small round deal table, that he might set out his mother's tea upon it.

"What art goin' to do?" she said, rather peevishly.

"I want thee to have a cup of tea, mother," answered Seth, tenderly. "It'll do thee good; and I'll put two or three of these things away, and make the house look more comfortable."

"Comfortable! How canst talk o' ma'in' things comfortable? Let a-be, let a-be. There's no comfort for me no more," she went on, the tears coming when she began to speak, "now thy poor feyther's gone, as I'n washed for and mended, an' got's victual for'm for thirty 'ear, an' him allays so pleased wi' iverything I done for'm, an' used to be so handy an' do the jobs for me when I war ill an' cumbered wi' th' babby, an' made me the posset an' brought it up stairs as proud as could be, an' carried the lad as war as heavy as two children for five mile, an' ne'er grumbled, all the way to War'son Wake, 'cause I wanted to go an' see my sister, as war dead an' gone the very next Christmas as e'er come. An' him to be drowned in the brook as we passed o'er the day we war married an' come home together, an' he'd made them lots o' shelves for me to put my plates an' things on, an' showed 'em me as proud as he could be, 'cause he know'd I should be pleased. An' he war to die an' me not to know, but to be a-sleepin' i' my bed, as if I caredna nocht about it. Eh! an' me to live to see that! An' us as war young folks once, an' thought we should do rarely when we war married! Let a-be, lad, let a-be! I wonna' ha' no tay; I carena if I ne'er ate nor drink no more. When one end o' th' bridge tumbles down, where's th' use o' th' other stannin'? I may's well die, an' foller my old man. There's no knowin' but he'll want me."

Here Lisbeth broke from words into moans, swaying herself backward and forward on her chair. Seth, always timid in his behavior toward his mother, from the sense that he had no influence over her, felt it was useless to attempt to persuade or soothe her till this passion was past; so he contented himself with tending the back-kitchen fire, and folding up his father's clothes, which had been hanging out to dry since morning; afraid to move about the room where his mother was, lest he should irritate her farther.

But after Lisbeth had been rocking herself and moaning

for some minutes, she suddenly paused, and said aloud to herself,

"I'll go and see arter Adam, for I canna think where he's gotten ; an' I want him to go up stairs wi' me afore it's dark, for the minutes to look at the corpse is like the meltin' snow."

Seth overheard this, and, coming into the kitchen again as his mother rose from her chair, he said,

"Adam's asleep in the workshop, mother. Thee'dst better not wake him. He was o'erwrought with work and trouble."

"Wake him! Who's a-goin' to wake him? I shanna wake him wi' lookin' at him. I hanna seen the lad this two hour—I'd welly forgot as he'd e'er growed up from a babby when's feyther carried him."

Adam was seated on a rough bench, his head supported by his arm, which rested from the shoulder to the elbow on the long planing-table in the middle of the workshop. It seemed as if he had sat down for a few minutes' rest, and had fallen asleep without slipping from his first attitude of sad, fatigued thought. His face, unwashed since yesterday, looked pallid and clammy ; his hair was tossed shaggily about his forehead, and his closed eyes had the sunken look which follows upon watching and sorrow. His brow was knit, and his whole face had an expression of weariness and pain. Gyp was evidently uneasy, for he sat on his haunches resting his nose on his master's stretched-out leg, and dividing the time between licking the hand that hung listlessly down and glancing with a listening air toward the door. The poor dog was hungry and restless, but would not leave his master, and was waiting impatiently for some change in the scene. It was owing to this feeling on Gyp's part that, when Lisbeth came into the workshop, and advanced toward Adam as noiselessly as she could, her intention not to awake him was immediately defeated ; for Gyp's excitement was too great to find vent in anything short of a sharp bark, and in a moment Adam opened his eyes and saw his mother standing before him. It was not very unlike his dream, for his sleep had been little more than living through again, in a fevered delirious way, all that had happened since daybreak, and his mother, with her fretful grief, was present to him through it all. The chief difference between the reality and the vision was that, in his dream, Hetty was continually coming before him in bodily presence, strangely mingling herself as an actor in scenes with which she had nothing

to do. She was even by the Willow Brook ; she made his mother angry by coming into the house, and he met her with her smart clothes quite wet through as he walked in the rain to Treddleston to tell the coroner. But wherever Hetty came, his mother was sure to follow soon ; and when he opened his eyes, it was not at all startling to see her standing near him.

"Eh, my lad, my lad !" Lisbeth burst out immediately, her wailing impulse returning, for grief in its freshness feels the need of associating its loss and its lament with every change of scene and incident, "Thee'st got nobody now but thy old mother to torment thee and be a burden to thee ; thy poor feyther 'ull ne'er anger thee no more ; an' thy mother may's well go arter him—the sooner the better—for I'm no good to nobody now. One old coat 'ull do to patch another, but it's good for noght else. Thee'dst like t' ha' a wife to mend thy clothes an' get thy victual, better nor thy old mother. An' I shall be noght but cumber, a-sittin' i' th' chimney-corner. (Adam winced and moved uneasily ; he dreaded, of all things, to hear his mother speak of Hetty.) But if thy feyther had lived, he'd ne'er ha' wanted me to go to make room for another, for he could no more ha' done wi'out me nor one side o' the scithers can do wi'out the tother. Eh, we should ha' been both flung away together, an' then I shouldna ha' seen this day, an' one buryin' 'ud ha' done for us both."

Here Lisbeth paused, but Adam sat in pained silence ; he could not speak otherwise than tenderly to his mother to-day ; but he could not help being irritated by this plaint. It was not possible for poor Lisbeth to know how it affected Adam, any more than it is possible for a wounded dog to know how his moans affect the nerves of his master. Like all complaining women, she complained in the expectation of being soothed ; and when Adam said nothing, she was only prompted to complain more bitterly.

"I know thee couldst do better wi'out me, for thee couldst go where thee likedst, an' marry them as thee likedst. But I donna want to say thee nay, let thee bring home who thee wut ; I'd ne'er open my lips to find faut, for when folks is old an' o' no use, they may think theirsens well off to get the bit an' the sup, though they'n to swallow ill words wi't. An' if thee'st set thy heart on a lass as'll bring thee noght and waste all, when thee might'st ha' them as 'ud make a man on thee, I'll say noght, now thy feyther's dead an' drowneded, for I'm no better nor an old haft when the blade's gone."

Adam, unable to bear this any longer, rose silently from the bench, and walked out of the workshop into the kitchen. But Lisbeth followed him.

"Thee wutna go up stairs an' see thy feyther, then? I'n done every thin' now, an' he'd like thee to go an' look at 'm, for he war always so pleased when thee wast mild to 'm."

Adam turned round at once, and said, "Yes, mother; let us go up stairs. Come, Seth, let us go together."

They went up stairs, and for five minutes all was silence. Then the key was turned again, and there was a sound of footsteps on the stairs. But Adam did not come down again; he was too weary and worn-out to encounter more of his mother's querulous grief, and he went to rest on his bed. Lisbeth no sooner entered the kitchen and sat down than she threw her apron over her head, and began to cry and moan, and rock herself as before. Seth thought, "She will be quieter by and by, now we have been up stairs;" and he went into the back kitchen again to tend his little fire, hoping that he should presently induce her to have some tea.

Lisbeth had been rocking herself in this way for more than five minutes, giving a low moan with every forward movement of her body, when she suddenly felt a hand placed gently on hers, and a sweet treble voice said to her, "Dear sister, the Lord has sent me to see if I can be a comfort to you."

Lisbeth paused, in a listening attitude, without removing her apron from her face. The voice was strange to her. Could it be her sister's spirit come back to her from the dead after all those years? She trembled, and dared not look.

Dinah, believing that this pause of wonder was in itself a relief for the sorrowing woman, said no more just yet, but quietly took off her bonnet, and then, motioning silence to Seth, who, on hearing her voice, had come in with a beating heart, laid one hand on the back of Lisbeth's chair, and leaned over her, that she might be aware of a friendly presence.

Slowly Lisbeth drew down her apron, and timidly she opened her dim dark eyes. She saw nothing at first but a face—a pure, pale face, with loving gray eyes, and it was quite unknown to her. Her wonder increased; perhaps it *was* an angel. But in the same instant Dinah had laid her hand on Lisbeth's again, and the old woman looked down at it. It was a much smaller hand than her own, but it was not white and delicate, for Dinah had never wore a glove in her life, and her hand bore the traces of labor from her childhood upward.

Lisbeth looked earnestly at the hand for a moment, and then, fixing her eyes again on Dinah's face, said, with something of restored courage, but in a tone of surprise,

"Why, ye're a workin' woman!"

"Yes, I am Dinah Morris, and I work in the cotton-mill when I am at home."

"Ah!" said Lisbeth slowly, still wondering; "ye comed in so light, like the shadow on the wall, an' spoke i' my ear, as I thought you might be a sperrit. Ye've got a'most the face of one as is a-sittin' on the grave i' Adam's new Bible."

"I come from the Hall Farm now. You know Mrs. Poyser—she's my aunt, and she has heard of your great affliction, and is very sorry; and I'm come to see if I can be any help to you in your trouble; for I know your sons Adam and Seth, and I know you have no daughter, and when the clergyman told me how the hand of God was heavy upon you, my heart went out towards you, and I felt a command to come and be to you in the place of a daughter in this grief, if you will let me."

"Ah! I know who y' are now; y' are a Methody, like Seth; he's tould me on you," said Lisbeth, fretfully, her overpowering sense of pain returning, now her wonder was gone. "Ye'll make it out as trouble's a good thing, like *he* allays does. But where's the use o' talkin' to me a-that'n? Ye canna make the smart less wi' talkin'. Ye'll ne'er make me believe as it's better for me not to ha' my old man die in 's bed, if he must die, an' ha' the parson to pray by 'm, and me to sit by 'm, an' tell him ne'er to mind th' ill words I'n gen him sometimes when I war angered, an' to gi' 'm a bit an' a sup, as long as a bit an' a sup he'd swallow. But eh! to die i' the could water, an' us close to 'm, an' ne'er to know; an' me a-sleepin', as if I ne'er belonged to 'm no more nor if he'd been a journeyman tramp from nobody knows where."

Here Lisbeth began to cry and rock herself again; and Dinah said,

"Yes, dear friend, your affliction is great. It would be hardness of heart to say that your trouble was not heavy to bear. God didn't send me to you to make light of your sorrow, but to mourn with you, if you will let me. If you had a table spread for a feast, and was making merry with your friends, you would think it was kind to let me come and sit down and rejoice with you, because you would think I should like to share those good things; but I should like better to share in your trouble and your labor, and it would seem harder

to me if you denied me that. You won't send me away? You're not angry with me for coming?"

"Nay, nay; angered! who said I war angered! It war good on you to come. An' Seth, why donna ye get her some tay? Ye war in a hurry to get some for me, as had no need, but ye donna think o' gettin' 't for them as wants it. Sit ye down; sit ye down. I thank ye kindly for comin', for it's little wage ye get by walkin' through the wet fields to see an old woman like me. . . . Nay, I'n got no daughter o' my own—ne'er had one—an' I warna sorry, for they're poor queechy things, gells is; I allays wanted to ha' lads, as could fend for theirsens. An' the lads 'ull be marryin'—I shall ha' daughters enoo, and too many. But now, do ye make the tay as ye like it, for I'n got no taste in my mouth this day; it's all one what I swaller—it's all got the taste o' sorrow wi't."

Dinah took care not to betray that she had had her tea, and accepted Lisbeth's invitation very readily, for the sake of persuading the old woman herself to take the food and drink she so much needed after a day of hard work and fasting.

Seth was so happy now Dinah was in the house that he could not help thinking her presence was worth purchasing with a life in which grief incessantly followed upon grief; but the next moment he reproached himself; it was almost as if he were rejoicing in his father's sad death. Nevertheless, the joy of being with Dinah *would* triumph; it was like the influence of climate, which no resistance can overcome. And the feeling even suffused itself over his face so as to attract his mother's notice while she was drinking her tea.

"Thee may'st well talk o' trouble bein' a good thing, Seth, for thee thriv'st on't. Thee look'st as if thee know'dst no more o' care an' cumber nor when thee wast a babby a-lyin' awake i' th' cradle. For thee'dst allays lie still wi' thy eyes open, an' Adam ne'er 'ud lie still a minute when he wakened. Thee wast allays like a bag o' meal as can ne'er be bruised, though, for the matter o' that, thy poor feyther were just such another. But ye've got the same look too" (here Lisbeth turned to Dinah); "I rackon it's wi' bein' a Methody. Not as I'm a-findin' fau't wi' ye for ye've no call to be frettin', an' somehow ye looken sorry too. Eh! well, if the Methodies are fond o' trouble, they're like to thrive; it's a pity they canna ha't all, and take it away from them as donna like it. I would ha' gi'en 'em plenty; for when I'd gotten my old man I war worried from morn till night; and now he's gone, I'd be glad for the worse o'er again."

"Yes, said Dinah, careful not to oppose any feeling of Lisbeth's, for her reliance, in her smallest words and deeds, on a divine guidance, always issued in that finest woman's tact which proceeds from acute and ready sympathy—"yes; I remember, too, when my dear aunt died, I longed for the sounds of her bad cough in the nights, instead of the silence that came when she was gone. But now, dear friend, drink this other cup of tea and eat a little more."

"What," said Lisbeth, taking the cup, and speaking in a less querulous tone, "had ye got no feyther and mother, then, as ye war so sorry about your aunt?"

"No, I never knew a father or mother; my aunt brought me up from a baby. She had no children, for she was never married, and she brought me up as tenderly as if I'd been her own child."

"Eh! she'd fine work wi' ye, I'll warrant, bringing ye up from a babby, an' her a lone woman; it's ill bringin' up a cade lamb. But I dare say ye warn a franzy, for ye look as if ye'd ne'er been angered i' your life. But what did ye do when your aunt died? an' why didna ye come to live i' this country, bein' as Mrs. Poyser's your aunt too?"

Dinah, seeing that Lisbeth's attention was attracted, told her the story of her early life—how she had been brought up to work hard, and what sort of place Snowfield was, and how many people had a hard life there—all the details that she thought likely to interest Lisbeth. The old woman listened, and forgot to be fretful, unconsciously subject to the soothing influence of Dinah's face and voice. After a while she was persuaded to let the kitchen be made tidy; for Dinah was bent on this, believing that the sense of order and quietude around her would help in disposing Lisbeth to join in the prayer she longed to pour forth at her side. Seth, meanwhile, went out to chop wood; for he surmised that Dinah would like to be left alone with his mother.

Lisbeth sat watching her as she moved about in her still, quick way, and said, at last, "Ye've got a notion o' cleanin' up. I wouldna mind ha'in' ye for a daughter, for ye wouldna spend the lad's wage i' fine clothes an' waste. Ye're not like the lasses o' this country-side. I reckon folks is different at Snowfield from what they are here."

"They have a different sort of life, many of 'em," said Dinah; "they work at different things—some in the mill, and many in the mines, in the villages round about. But the heart of man is the same everywhere, and there are the children of

this world and the children of light there as well as elsewhere. But we've many more Methodists there than in this country."

"Well, I didna know as the Methody women were like ye, for there's Will Maskery's wife, as they say's a big Methody, isna pleasant to look at at all. I'd as lief look at a tooad. An' I'mthinkin' I wouldna mind if ye'd stay an' sleep here, for I should like to see ye i' th' house i' th' mornin'. But may happen they'll be lookin' for ye at Mester Poyser's."

"No," said Dinah, "they don't expect me, and I should like to stay, if you'll let me."

"Well, there's room; I'n got my bed laid i' th' little room o'er the back kitchen, an' ye can lie beside me. I'd be glad to ha' ye wi' me to speak to i' th' night, for ye've got a nice way o' talkin'. It puts me i' mind o' the swallows as was under the thack last 'ear, when they fust begun to sing low an' soft-like i' th' mornin'. Eh, but my old man war fond o' them birds! an' so war Adam, but they'n ne'er comed again this 'ear. Happen they're dead too."

"There," said Dinah, "now the kitchen looks tidy, and now, dear mother—for I'm your daughter to-night, you know—I should like you to wash your face and have a clean cap on. Do you remember what David did when God took away his child from him? While the child was yet alive he fasted and prayed to God to spare it, and he would neither eat nor drink, but lay on the ground all night, beseeching for the child. But when he knew it was dead, he rose up from the ground and washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes, and ate and drank; and when they asked him how it was that he seemed to have left off grieving now the child was dead, he said, 'While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, why should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.'"

"Eh, that's a true word!" said Lisbeth. "Yes, my old man wonna come back to me, but I shall go to him—the sooner the better. Well, ye may do as ye likè wi' me; there's a clean cap i' that drawer, an' I'll go i' the back kitchen an' wash my face. An', Seth, thee may'st reach down Adam's new Bible wi' th' picters in, an' she shall read us a chapter. Eh, I like them words—I shall go to him, but he wonna come back to me."

Dinah and Seth were both inwardly offering thanks for the greater quietness of spirit that had come over Lisbeth. This

was what Dinah had been trying to bring about, through all her still sympathy and absence from exhortation. From her girlhood upward she had had experience among the sick and the mourning, among minds hardened and shriveled through poverty and ignorance, and had gained the subtlest perception of the mode in which they could best be touched, and softened into willingness to receive words of spiritual consolation or warning. As Dinah expressed it, "She was never left to herself, but it was always given her when to keep silence and when to speak." And do we not all agree to call rapid thought and noble impulse by the name of inspiration? After our subtlest analysis of the mental process, we must still say, as Dinah did, that our highest thoughts and our best deeds are all given to us.

And so there was earnest prayer—there was faith, love, and hope pouring itself forth that evening in the little kitchen. And poor, aged, fretful Lisbeth, without grasping any distinct idea, without going through any course of religious emotions, felt a vague sense of goodness and love, and of something right lying underneath and beyond all this sorrowing life.

She couldn't understand the sorrow; but, for these moments, under the subduing influence of Dinah's spirit, she felt that she must be patient and still.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE COTTAGE.

It was but half past four the next morning when Dinah, tired of lying awake listening to the birds, and watching the growing light through the little window in the garret roof, rose and began to dress herself very quietly, lest she should disturb Lisbeth. But already some one else was astir in the house, and gone down stairs preceded by Gyp. The dog's pattering step was a sure sign that it was Adam who went down; but Dinah was not aware of this, and she thought it was more likely to be Seth, for he had told her how Adam had staid up working the night before. Seth, however, had only just awaked at the sound of the opening door. The exciting influence of the previous day, heightened at last by

Dinah's unexpected presence, had not been counteracted by any bodily weariness, for he had not done his ordinary amount of hard work ; and so, when he went to bed, it was not till he had tired himself with hours of tossing wakefulness that drowsiness came, and led on a heavier morning sleep than was usual with him.

But Adam had been refreshed by his long rest, and with his habitual impatience of mere passivity, he was eager to begin the new day, and subdue sadness by his strong will and strong arm. The white mist lay in the valley ; it was going to be a bright, warm day, and he would start to work again when he had had his breakfast.

"There's nothing but what's bearable as long as a man can work," he said to himself ; "the nature o' things doesn't change, though it seems as if one's own life was nothing but change. The square o' four is sixteen, and you must lengthen your lever in proportion to your weight, is as true when a man's miserable as when he's happy ; and the best o' working is, it gives you a grip hold o' things outside your own lot."

As he dashed the cold water over his head and face, he felt completely himself again, and with his black eyes as keen as ever, and his thick black hair all glistening with the fresh moisture, he went into the workshop to look out the wood for his father's coffin, intending that he and Seth should carry it with them to Jonathan Burge's, and have the coffin made by one of the workmen there, so that his mother might not see and hear the sad task going forward at home.

He had just gone into the workshop when his quick ear detected a light rapid foot on the stairs—certainly not his mother's. He had been in bed and asleep when Dinah had come in in the evening, and now he wondered whose step this could be. A foolish thought came and moved him strangely. As if it could be Hetty ! She was the last person likely to be in the house. And yet he felt reluctant to go and look, and have the clear proof that it was some one else. He stood leaning on a plank he had taken hold of, listening to sounds which his imagination interpreted for him so pleasantly that the keen strong face became suffused with a timid tenderness. The light footstep moved about the kitchen, followed by the sound of the sweeping-brush, hardly making so much noise as the lightest breeze that chases the autumn leaves along the dusty path ; and Adam's imagination saw a dimpled face, with dark bright eyes and roguish smiles, looking backward at this brush, and a rounded figure just leaning a little to clasp the

handle. A very foolish thought—it could not be Hetty ; but the only way of dismissing such nonsense from his head was to go and see *who* it was, for his fancy only got nearer and nearer to belief while he stood there listening. He loosed the plank, and went to the kitchen door.

“ How do you do, Adam Bede ? ” said Dinah, in her calm treble, pausing from her sweeping, and fixing her mild grave eyes upon him. “ I trust you feel rested and strengthened again to bear the burden and heat of the day.”

“ It was like dreaming of the sunshine, and awaking in the moonlight. Adam had seen Dinah several times, but always at the Hall Farm, where he was not very vividly conscious of any woman’s presence except Hetty’s, and he had only in the last day or two begun to suspect that Seth was in love with her, so that his attention had not hitherto been drawn toward her for his brother’s sake. But now her slim figure, her plain black gown, and her pale serene face, impressed him with all the force that belongs to a reality contrasted with a pre-occupying fancy. For the first moment or two he made no answer, but looked at her with the concentrated, examining glance which a man gives to an object in which he has suddenly begun to be interested. Dinah, for the first time in her life, felt a painful self-consciousness ; there was something in the dark penetrating glance of this strong man so different from the mildness and timidity of his brother Seth. A faint blush came, which deepened as she wondered at it. This blush recalled Adam from his forgetfulness.

“ I was quite taken by surprise ; it was very good of you to come and see my mother in her trouble,” he said in a gentle, grateful tone, for his quick mind told him at once how she came to be there. “ I hope my mother was thankful to have you,” he added, wondering rather anxiously what had been Dinah’s reception.

“ Yes,” said Dinah, resuming her work, “ she seemed greatly comforted after a while, and she’s had a good deal of rest in the night by times. She was fast asleep when I left her.”

“ Who was it took the news to the Hall Farm ? ” said Adam, his thoughts reverting to some one there : he wondered whether *she* had felt anything about it.

“ It was Mr. Irwine, the clergyman, told me, and my aunt was grieved for your mother when she heard it, and wanted me to come ; and so is my uncle, I’m sure, now he’s heard it, but he was gone out to Rosseter all yesterday. They’ll look

for you there as soon as you've got time to go, for there's nobody round that hearth but what's glad to see you."

Dinah, with her sympathetic divination, knew quite well that Adam was longing to hear if Hetty had said anything about their trouble ; she was too rigorously truthful for benevolent invention, but she had contrived to say something in which Hetty was tacitly included. Love has a way of cheating itself consciously, like a child who plays at solitary hide-and-seek ; it is pleased with assurances that it all the while disbelieves. Adam liked what Dinah had said so much that his mind was directly full of the next visit he should pay to the Hall Farm, when Hetty would, perhaps, behave more kindly to him than she had ever done before.

"But you won't be there yourself any longer?" he said to Dinah.

"No, I go back to Snowfield on Saturday, and I shall have to set out to Treddleston early, to be in time for the Oakbourne carrier. So I must go back to the farm to-night, that I may have the last day with my aunt and her children. But I can stay here all to-day if your mother would like me ; and her heart seemed inclined toward me last night."

"Ah ! then, she's sure to want you to-day. If mother takes to people at the beginning, she's sure to get fond of 'em ; but she's a strange way of not liking young women. 'Though, to be sure," Adam went on smiling, "her not liking other young women is no reason why she shouldn't like you."

Hitherto Gyp had been assisting at this conversation in motionless silence, seated on his haunches, and alternately looking up in his master's face to watch its expression, and observing Dinah's movements about the kitchen. The kind smile with which Adam uttered the last words was apparently decisive with Gyp of the light in which the stranger was to be regarded ; and, as she turned round after putting aside her sweeping-brush, he trotted toward her, and put his muzzle against her hand in a friendly way.

"You see Gyp bids you welcome," said Adam, "and he's very slow to welcome strangers."

"Poor dog !" said Dinah, patting the rough, gray coat, "I've a strange feeling about the dumb things as if they wanted to speak, and it was a trouble to 'em because they couldn't. I can't help being sorry for the dogs always, though, perhaps, there's no need. But they may well have more in them than they know how to make us understand, for we can't say half what we feel, with all our words."

Seth came down now, and was pleased to find Adam talking with Dinah ; he wanted Adam to know how much better she was than all other women. But after a few words of greeting Adam drew him into the workshop to consult about the coffin, and Dinah went on with her cleaning.

By six o'clock they were all at breakfast with Lisbeth, in a kitchen as clean as she could have made it herself. The window and door were open, and the morning air brought with it a mingled scent of southern-wood, thyme, and sweet-briar from the path of garden by the side of the cottage. Dinah did not sit down at first, but moved about serving the others with the warm porridge and the toasted oat-cake, which she had got ready in the usual way, for she had asked Seth to tell her just what his mother gave them for breakfast. Lisbeth had been usually silent since she came down stairs, apparently requiring some time to adjust her ideas to a state of things in which she came down like a lady to find all the work done, and sat still to be waited on. Her new sensations seemed to exclude the remembrance of her grief. At last, after tasting the porridge, she broke silence :

"Ye might ha' made the parridge worse," she said to Dinah ; "I can ate it wi'out it's turnin' my stomach. It might ha' been a trifle thicker an' no harm, an' I allays putten a sprig o' mint in mysen ; but how's ye t' know that ? Th' lad arena like to get folks as 'ull make their parridge as I'n made it for 'em ; it's well if they get onybody as 'ull make parridge at all. But ye might do wi' a bit o' showin' ; for ye're a stirrin' body in a mornin', an' ye've a light heel, an' ye've cleaned th' house well enoof for a ma'shift."

"Makeshift, mother !" said Adam. "Why, I think the house looks beautiful. I don't know how it could look better."

"Thee dostna know. Nay, how's thee to know ? Th' men ne'er know whether the floor is cleaned or cat-licked. But thee't know when thee gets thy parridge burnt, as thee't like ha' it when I'n gi'en o'er makin' it. Thee't think thy mother war good for sommat then."

"Dinah," said Seth, "do come and sit down now and have your breakfast. We're all served now."

"Ay, come an' sit ye down, do," said Lisbeth, "an' ate a morsel ; ye'd need, arter bein' upo' your legs this hour an' half a'ready. Come, then," she added, in a tone of complaining affection, as Dinah sat down by her side, "I'll be loath for ye t' go, but ye canna stay much longer, I doubt. I could put up wi' ye i' th' house better nor wi' most folks."

"I'll stay till to-night if you're willing," said Dinah. "I'd stay longer, only I'm going back to Snowfield on Saturday, and I must be with my aunt to-morrow."

"Eh! I'd ne'er go back to that country. My old man come from that Stonyshire side, but he left it when he war a young un, an' i' the right on't too: for he said as there war no wood there, an' it 'ud ha' been a bad country for a carpenter."

"Ah!" said Adam, "I remember father telling me, when I was a little lad, that he made up his mind if ever he moved it should be south'ard. But I'm not so sure about it. Bartle Massey says—and he knows the south—as the northern men are a finer breed than the southern, harder-hearted and stronger-bodied, and a deal taller. And then he says in some o' those counties it's as flat as the back o' your hand, and you can see nothing of a distance without climbing up the highest trees. I couldn't abide that; I like to go to work by a road that'll take me up a bit of a hill, and see the fields for miles round me, and a bridge or a town, or a bit of steeple here and there. It makes you feel the world's a big place, and there's other men working in it with their heads and hands besides yourself."

"I like the hills best," said Seth, "when the clouds are over your head, and you see the sun shining ever so far off, over the Loamford way, as I've often done o' late, on the stormy days; it seems to me as if that was heaven, where there's always joy and sunshine, though this life's dark and cloudy."

"Oh, I love the Stonyshire side," said Dinah; "I shouldn't like to set my face towards the countries where they're rich in corn and cattle, and the ground so level and easy to tread, and to turn my back on the hills where the poor people have to live such a hard life, and the men spend their days in the mines away from the sunlight. It's very blessed on a bleak, cold day, when the sky is hanging dark over the hill, to feel the love of God in one's soul, and carry it to the lonely, bare, stone houses, where there's nothing else to give comfort."

"Eh!" said Lisbeth, "that's very well for ye to talk, as looks welly like the snowdrop flowers as ha' lived for days an' days when I'n gathered 'em, wi' nothing but a drop o' water an' a peep o' daylight; but the hungry foulks had better leave th' hungry country. It makes less mouths for the scant cake. "But," she went on, looking at Adam, "donna thee talk o' goin' south'ard or north'ard, an' leavin' thy feyther an' mother

i' the churchyard, an' goin' to a country they know nothin' on. I'll ne'er rest i' my grave if I donna see thee i' th' churchyard of a Sunday."

"Donna fear, mother," said Adam. "If I hadna made up my mind not to go, I should ha' been gone before now."

He had finished his breakfast now, and rose as he was speaking.

"What art goin' to do?" asked Lisbeth. "Set about thy feyther's coffin?"

"No, mother," said Adam; "we're going to take the wood to the village, and have it made there."

"Nay, my lad, nay," Lisbeth burst out in an eager, wailing tone, "thee wotna let nobody make thy feyther's coffin but thysen? Who'd make it so well? An' him as know'd what good work war, an's got a son as is th' head o' the village, an' all Treddles'on too, for cleverness."

"Very well, mother; if that's thy wish, I'll make the coffin at home; but I thought thee wouldstna like to hear the work going on."

"An' why shouldna I like 't? It's the right thing to be done. An' what's likin' got to do wi't? It's choice o' mislikin's is all I'n got i' this world. One mossel's as good as another when your mouth's out o' taste. Thee maun set about it now this morning fust thing. I wunna ha' nobody to touch the coffin but thee."

Adam's eyes met Seth's, which looked from Dinah to him rather wistfully.

"No, mother," he said. "I'll not consent 'but Seth shall have a hand in it too, if it's to be done at home. I'll go to the village this forenoon, because Mr. Burge 'ull want to see me, and Seth shall stay at home and begin the coffin. I can come back at noon, and then he can go."

"Nay, nay," persisted Lisbeth, beginning to cry, "I'n set my heart on't as thee shalt ma' thy feyther's coffin. Thee't so stiff an' masterful, thee't ne'er do as thy mother wants thee. Thee wast often angered wi' thy feyther when he war alive; thee must be the better to 'm, now he's goen'. He'd ha' thought nothin' on't for Seth to ma's coffin."

"Say no more, Adam, say no more," said Seth, gently, though his voice told that he spoke with some effort; "mother's in the right. I'll go to work, and do thee stay at home."

He passed into the workshop immediately, followed by Adam; while Lisbeth, automatically obeying her old habits, began to put away the breakfast things, as if she did not mean

Dinah to take her place any longer. Dinah said nothing, but presently used the opportunity of quietly joining the brothers in the workshop.

They had already got on their aprons and paper caps, and Adam was standing with his left hand on Seth's shoulder, while he pointed with the hammer in his right to some boards which they were looking at. Their backs were turned toward the door by which Dinah entered, and she came in so gently that they were not aware of her presence till they heard her voice saying, "Seth Bede!" Seth started, and they both turned round. Dinah looked as if she did not see Adam, and fixed her eyes on Seth's face, saying, with calm kindness,

"I won't say farewell. I shall see you again when you come from work. So as I'm at the farm before dark, it will be quite soon enough."

"Thank you, Dinah; I should like to walk home with you once more. It'll perhaps be the last time."

There was a little tremor in Seth's voice. Dinah put out her hand and said, "You'll have sweet peace in your mind to-day, Seth, for your tenderness and long suffering toward your aged mother."

She turned round and left the workshop as quickly and quietly as she had entered it. Adam had been observing her closely all the while, but she had not looked at him. As soon as she was gone, he said,

"I don't wonder at thee for loving her, Seth. She's got a face like a lily."

Seth's soul rushed to his eyes and lips; he had never yet confessed his secret to Adam, but now he felt a delicious sense of disburdenment, as he answered,

"Ay, Addy, I do love her—too much, I doubt. But she doesna love me, lad, only as one child o' God loves another. She'll never love any man as a husband—that's my belief."

"Nay, lad, there's no telling; thee mustna lose heart. She's made out of stuff with a finer grain than most o' the women; I can see that clear enough. But if she's better than they are in other things, I canna think she'll fall short of 'em in loving."

No more was said. Seth set out to the village, and Adam began his work on the coffin.

"God help the lad, and me too," he thought, as he lifted the board. "We're like enough to find life a tough job—hard work inside and out. It's a strange thing to think of a man as can lift a chair with his teeth, and walk fifty mile on

end, trembling and turning hot and cold at only a look from one woman out of all the rest i' the world. It's a mystery we can give no account of ; but no more we can of the sprouting o' the seed, for that matter."

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE WOOD.

THAT same Thursday morning, as Arthur Donnithorne was moving about in his dressing-room, seeing his well-looking British person reflected in the old-fashioned mirrors, and stared at, from a dingy olive-green piece of tapestry, by Pharoah's daughter and her maidens, who ought to have been minding the infant Moses, he was holding a discussion with himself, which, by the time his valet was tying the black silk sling over his shoulder, had issued in a distinct practical resolution.

"I mean to go to Eagledale and fish for a week or so," he said, aloud. "I shall take you with me, Pym, and set off this morning ; so be ready by half-past eleven."

The low whistle, which had assisted him in arriving at this resolution, here broke out into his loudest ringing tenor, and the corridor, as he hurried along it, echoed to his favorite song from the "Beggar's Opera," "When the heart of a man is oppressed with care." Not an heroic strain ; nevertheless, Arthur felt himself very heroic as he strode toward the stables to give his orders about his horses. His own approbation was necessary to him, and it was not an approbation to be enjoyed quite gratuitously ; it must be won by a fair amount of merit. He had never yet forfeited that approbation, and he had considerable reliance on his own virtues. No young man could confess his faults more candidly ; candor was one of his favorite virtues ; and how can a man's candor be seen in all its lustre unless he has a few failings to talk of ? But he had an agreeable confidence that his faults were all of a generous kind—impetuous, warm-blooded, leonine ; never crawling, crafty, reptilian. It was not possible for Arthur Donnithorne to do anything mean, dastardly, or cruel. "No ! I'm a devil of a fellow for getting myself into a hobble, but I always take care the load shall fall on my own shoulders,"

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Unhappily, there is no inherent poetical justice in hobbles, and they will sometimes obstinately refuse to inflict their worst consequences on the prime offender in spite of his loudly expressed wish. It was entirely owing to this deficiency in the scheme of things that Arthur had ever brought any one into trouble besides himself. He was nothing, if not good-natured ; and all his pictures of the future, when he should come into the estate, were made up of a prosperous, contented tenantry, adoring their landlord, who would be the model of an English gentleman—mansion in first-rate order, all elegance and high taste—jolly housekeeping—finest stud in Loamshire—purse open to all public objects—in short, everything as different as possible from what was now associated with the name of Donnithorne. And one of the first good actions he would perform in that future should be to increase Irwine's income for the vicarage of Hayslope, so that he might keep a carriage for his mother and sisters. His hearty affection for the rector dated from the age of frocks and trousers. It was an affection, partly filial, partly fraternal—fraternal enough to make him like Irwine's company better than that of most younger men, and filial enough to make him shrink strongly from incurring Irwine's disapprobation.

You perceive that Arthur Donnithorne was "a good fellow"—all his college friends thought him such ; he couldn't bear to see any one uncomfortable ; he would have been very sorry even in his angriest moods for any harm to happen to his grandfather ; and his aunt Lydia herself had the benefit of that soft-heartedness which he bore toward the whole sex. Whether he would have self-mastery enough to be always as harmless and purely beneficent as his good-nature led him to desire, was a question that no one had yet decided against him ; he was but twenty-one, you remember ; and we don't inquire too closely into character in the case of a handsome, generous young fellow, who will have property enough to support numerous peccadilloes—who, if he should unfortunately break a man's legs in his rash driving, will be able to pension him handsomely ; or, if he should happen to spoil a woman's existence for her, will make it up to her with expensive *bon-bons*, packed up and directed by his own hand. It would be ridiculous to be prying and analytic in such cases, as if one were inquiring into the character of a confidential clerk. We use round, general, gentlemanly epithets about a young man of birth and fortune ; and ladies, with that fine intuition which is the distinguishing attribute of their sex, see at once that he is "nice."

The chances are that he will go through life without scandalizing any one—a sea-worthy vessel that one would refuse to insure. Ships, certainly, are liable to casualties, which sometimes make terribly evident some flaw in their construction that would never have been discoverable in smooth water ; and many a “good fellow,” through a disastrous combination of circumstances, has undergone a like betrayal.

But we have no fair ground for entertaining unfavorable auguries concerning Arthur Donnithorne, who this morning proves himself capable of a prudent resolution founded on conscience. One thing is clear : Nature has taken care that he shall never go far astray with perfect comfort and satisfaction to himself ; he will never get beyond that border-land of sin, where he will be perpetually harassed by assaults from the other side of the boundary. He will never be a courtier of Vice, and wear her orders in his button-hole.

It was about ten o'clock, and the sun was shining brilliantly ; everything was looking lovelier for the yesterday's rain. It is a pleasant thing on such a morning to walk along the well-rolled gravel on one's way to the stables, meditating an excursion. But the scent of the stables, which, in a natural state of things, ought to be among the soothing influences of a man's life, always brought with it some irritation to Arthur. There was no having his own way in the stables ; everything was managed in the stingiest fashion. His grandfather persisted in retaining as head groom an old dolt whom no sort of lever could move out of his old habits, and who was allowed to hire a succession of raw Loamshire lads as his subordinates, one of whom had lately tested a new pair of shears by clipping an oblong patch on Arthur's bay mare. This state of things is naturally imbittering ; one can put up with annoyances in the house, but to have the stable made a scene of vexation and disgust, is a point beyond what human flesh and blood can be expected to endure long together without danger of misanthropy.

Old John's wooden, deep-wrinkled face was the first object that met Arthur's eyes as he entered the stable-yard, and it quite poisoned for him the bark of the two blood-hounds that kept watch there. He could never speak quite patiently to the old blockhead.

“You must have Meg saddled for me and brought to the door at half-past eleven ; and I shall want Rattler saddled for Pym at the same time. Do you hear?”

“Yes, I hear, I hear, cap'n,” said old John, very deliber-

ately following the young master into the stable. John considered a young master as the natural enemy of an old servant, and young people in general as a poor contrivance for carrying on the world.

Arthur went in for the sake of patting Meg, declining as far as possible to see anything in the stables, lest he should lose his temper before breakfast. The pretty creature was in one of the inner stables, and turned her mild head as her master came beside her. Little Trot, a tiny spaniel, her inseparable companion in the stable, was comfortably curled up on her back.

"Well, Meg, my pretty girl," said Arthur, patting her neck, "we'll have a glorious canter this morning."

"Nay, your honor, I donna see as that can be," said John.

"Not be! why not?"

"Why she's got lamed."

"Lamed, confound you! what do you mean?"

"Why, th' lad took her too close to Dalton's hosses, an' one on 'em flung out at her, an' she's got her shank bruised o' near the fore leg."

The judicious historian abstains from narrating precisely what ensued. You understand that there was a great deal of strong language, mingled with soothing "who-ho's" while the leg was examined; that John stood by with quite as much emotion as if he had been a cunningly-carved crab-tree walking-stick, and that Arthur Donnithorne presently repassed the iron gates of the pleasure ground without singing as he went.

He considered himself thoroughly disappointed and annoyed. There was not another mount in the stable for himself and his servant besides Meg and Rattler. It was vexatious; just when he wanted to get out of the way for a week or two. It seemed culpable in Providence to allow such a combination of circumstances. To be shut up at the Chase with a broken arm, when every other fellow in his regiment was enjoying himself at Windsor—shut up with his grandfather, who had the same sort of affection for him as for his parchment deeds! And to be disgusted at every turn with the management of the house and the estate! In such circumstances a man necessarily gets in an ill humor, and works off the irritation by some excess of other. "Salkeld would have drunk a bottle of port every day," he muttered to himself; "but I'm not well seasoned enough for that. Well, since I can't go to Eagledale, I'll have a gallop on Rattler to Norburne this morning and lunch with Gawaine."

Behind this explicit resolution there lay an implicit one. If he lunched with Gawaine and lingered chatting, he would not reach the Chase again till nearly five, when Hetty would be safe out of his sight in the housekeeper's room ; and when she set out to go home, it would be his lazy time after dinner, so he should keep out of her way altogether. There really would have been no harm in being kind to the little thing, and it was worth dancing with a dozen ball-room belles only to look at Hetty for half an hour. But, perhaps, he had better not take any more notice of her ; it might put notions into her head, as Irwine had hinted ; though Arthur, for his part, thought girls were not by any means so soft and easily bruised ; indeed, he had generally found them twice as cool and cunning as he was himself. As for any real harm in Hetty's case, it was out of the question ; Arthur Donnithorne accepted his own bond for himself with perfect confidence.

So the twelve o'clock sun saw him galloping toward Norburne ; and by good fortune Halsell Common lay in his road, and gave him some fine leaps for Rattler. Nothing like "taking" a few brushes and ditches for exorcising a demon ; and it is really astonishing that the Centaurs, with their immense advantages in this way, have left so bad a reputation in history.

After this, you will perhaps be surprised to hear that, although Gawaine was at home, the hand of the dial in the court-yard had scarcely cleared the last stroke of three, when Arthur returned through the entrance-gates, got down from the panting Rattler, and went into the house to take a hasty luncheon. But I believe there have been men since his day who have ridden a long way to avoid a rencounter, and then galloped hastily back lest they should miss it. It is the favorite stratagem of our passions to sham a retreat, and to turn sharp round upon us at the moment we have made up our minds that the day is our own.

"The cap'n's been ridin' the devil's own pace," said Dalton, the coachman—whose person stood out in high relief, as he smoked his pipe, against the stable wall—when John brought up Rattler.

"An' I wish he'd get the devil to do's grooming for'n," growled John.

"Ay ; he'd hev a deal hamabler groom nor what he hes now," observed Dalton ; and the joke appeared to him so good, that, being left alone upon the scene, he continued at intervals to take his pipe from his mouth in order to wink at

an imaginary audience, and shake luxuriously with a silent, ventral laughter ; mentally rehearsing the dialogue from the beginning, that he might recite it with effect in the servants' hall.

When Arthur went up to his dressing-room again after luncheon, it was inevitable that the debate he had had with himself there earlier in the day should flash across his mind ; but it was impossible for him now to dwell on the remembrance—impossible to call the feelings and reflections which had been decisive with him then, any more than to recall the peculiar scent of the air that had fastened him when he first opened his window. The desire to see Hetty had rushed back like an ill-stemmed current ; he was amazed himself at the force with which this trivial fancy seemed to grasp him ; he was even rather tremulous as he brushed his hair—pooh ! it was riding in that breakneck way. It was because he had made a serious affair of an idle matter, by thinking of it as if it were of any consequence. He would amuse himself by seeing Hetty to-day, and get rid of the whole thing from his mind. It was all Irwine's fault. "If Irwine had said nothing, I shouldn't have thought half as much of Hetty as of Meg's lameness." However, it was just the sort of day for lolling in the Hermitage, and he would go and finish Dr. Moore's *Zeluco* there before dinner. The Hermitage stood in Fir-tree Grove—the way Hetty was sure to come in walking from the Hall Farm. So nothing could be simpler and more natural ; meeting Hetty was a mere circumstance of his walk, not its object.

Arthur's shadow flitted rather faster among the sturdy oaks of the Chase than might have been expected from the shadow of a tired man on a warm afternoon, and it was still scarcely four o'clock when he stood before the tall, narrow gate leading into the delicious labyrinthine wood which skirted one side of the Chase, and which was called Fir-tree Grove, not because the firs were many, but because they were few. It was a wood of beeches and limes, with here and there a light, silver-stemmed birch—just the sort of wood most haunted by the nymphs ; you see their white, sun-lit limbs gleaming athwart the boughs, or peeping from behind the smooth-sweeping outline of a tall lime ; you hear their soft, liquid laughter ; but if you look with a too curious, sacrilegious eye, they vanish behind the silvery beeches, they make you believe that their voice was only a running brooklet, perhaps they metamorphose themselves into a tawny squirrel that scampers away and mocks you from the top-

most bough. Not a grove with measured grass or rolled gravel for you to tread upon, but with narrow, hollow-shaped, earthy paths, edged with faint dashes of delicate moss—paths which look as if they were made by the free-will of the trees and underwood, moving reverently aside to look at the tall queen of the white-footed nymphs.

It was along the broadest of these paths that Arthur Donithorne passed, under an avenue of limes and beeches. It was a still afternoon; the golden light was lingering languidly among the upper boughs, only glancing down here and there on the purple pathway and its edge of faintly-sprinkled moss; an afternoon in which destiny disguises her cold, awful face behind a hazy, radiant veil, incloses us in warm, downy wings, and poisons us with violet-scented breath. Arthur strolled along carelessly, with a book under his arm, but not looking on the ground as meditative men are apt to do; his eyes *would* fix themselves on the distant bend in the road, round which a little figure must surely appear before long. Ah! there she comes; first, a bright patch of color, like a tropic bird among the boughs; then a tripping figure, with a round hat on, and a small basket under her arm; then a deep-blushing, almost frightened, but bright-smiling girl, making her curtsy with a fluttered yet happy glance, as Arthur came up to her. If Arthur had had time to think at all, he would have thought it strange that he should feel fluttered too, be conscious of blushing too—in fact, look and feel as foolish as if he had been taken by surprise instead of meeting just what he expected. Poor things! It was a pity they were not in that golden age of childhood when they would have stood face to face, eying each other with timid liking, then giving each other a little butterfly kiss, and toddled off to play together. Arthur would have gone home to his silk-curtain cot, and Hetty to her home-spun pillow, and both would have slept without dreams, and to-morrow would have been a life hardly conscious of yesterday.

Arthur turned round and walked by Hetty's side without giving a reason. They were alone together for the first time. What an overpowering presence that first privacy is! He actually dared not look at this little buttermaker for the first minute or two. As for Hetty, her feet rested on a cloud, and she was borne along by warm zephyrs; she had forgotten her rose-colored ribbons; she was no more conscious of her limbs than if her childish soul had passed into a water-lily, resting on a liquid bed, and warmed by the midsummer sunbeams.

It may seem a contradiction, but Arthur gathered a certain carelessness and confidence from his timidity ; it was an entirely different state of mind from what he had expected in such a meeting with Hetty ; and full as he was of vague feeling, there was room, in those moments of silence, for the thought that his previous debates and scruples were needless.

"You are quite right to choose this way of coming to the Chase," he said at last, looking down at Hetty ; "it is so much prettier as well as shorter than coming by either of the lodges."

"Yes, sir," Hetty answered, with a tremulous, almost whispering voice. She didn't know one bit how to speak to a gentleman like Mr. Arthur, and her very vanity made her more coy of speech.

"Do you come every week to see Mrs. Pomfret ?"

"Yes, sir, every Thursday, only when she's got to go out with Miss Donnithorne."

"And she's teaching you something, is she ?"

"Yes, sir, the lace-mending as she learned abroad, and the stocking-mending—it looks just like the stocking, you can't tell it's been mended ; and she teaches me cutting-out too."

"What, are *you* going to be a lady's-maid ?"

"I should like to be one very much indeed." Hetty spoke more audibly now, but still rather tremulously ; she thought, perhaps she seemed as stupid to Captain Donnithorne as Luke Britton did to her.

"I suppose Mrs. Pomfret always expects you at this time ?"

"She expects me at four o'clock. I'm rather late to-day, because my aunt couldn't spare me ; but the regular time is four, because that gives us time before Miss Donnithorne's bell rings."

"Ah ! then I must not keep you now, else I should like to show you the Hermitage. Did you ever see it ?"

"No, sir."

"This is the walk where we turn up to it. But we must not go now. I'll show it you some other time if you'd like to see it."

"Yes, please, sir."

"Do you always come back this way in the evening, or are you afraid to come so lonely a road ?"

"Oh no, sir, it's never late ; I always set out by eight

o'clock, and it's so light now in the evening. My aunt would be angry with me if I didn't get home before nine."

"Perhaps Craig, the gardener, comes to take care of you?"

A deep blush overspread Hetty's face and neck. "I'm sure he doesn't; I'm sure he never did; I wouldn't let him; I don't like him," she said hastily, and the tears of vexation had come so fast that before she had done speaking a bright drop rolled down her hot cheek. Then she felt ashamed to death that she was crying, and for one long instant her happiness was all gone. But in the next she felt an arm steal round her, and a gentle voice said,

"Why, Hetty, what makes you cry? I didn't mean to vex you. I wouldn't vex you for the world, you little blossom. Come, don't cry; look at me, else I shall think you won't forgive me."

Arthur had laid his hand on the soft arm that was nearest to him, and was stooping toward Hetty with a look of coaxing entreaty. Hetty lifted her long dewy lashes, and met the eyes that were bent toward her with a sweet, timid, beseeching look. What a space of time those three moments were, while their eyes met and his arms touched her! Love is such a simple thing when we have only one-and-twenty summers and a sweet girl of seventeen trembles under our glance, as if she were a bud first opening her heart with wondering rapture to the morning. Such young unfurrowed souls roll to meet each other like two velvet peaches that touch softly and are at rest; they mingle as easily as two brooklets that ask for nothing but to entwine themselves and ripple with ever-interlacing curves in the leafiest hiding-places. While Arthur gazed into Hetty's dark beseeching eyes, it made no difference to him what sort of English she spoke; and even if hoops and powder had been in fashion, he would very likely not have been sensible just then that Hetty wanted those signs of high breeding.

But they started asunder with beating hearts; something had fallen on the ground with a rattling noise: it was Hetty's basket; all her little workwoman's matters were scattered on the path, some of them showing a capability of rolling to great lengths. There was much to be done in picking up, and not a word was spoken; but when Arthur hung the basket over her arm again, the poor child felt a strange difference in his look and manner. He just pressed her hand, and said, with a look and tone that were almost chilling to her,

"I have been hindering you ; I must not keep you any longer now. You will be expected at the house. Good-by."

Without waiting for her to speak, he turned away from her, and hurried back toward the road that led to the Hermitage, leaving Hetty to pursue her way in a strange dream, that seemed to have begun in bewildering delight, and was now passing into contrarieties and sadness. Would he meet her again as she came home ? Why had he spoken almost as if he were displeased with her, and then run away so suddenly ? She cried, hardly knowing why.

Arthur, too, was very uneasy, but his feelings were lit up for him by a more distinct consciousness. He hurried to the Hermitage, which stood in the heart of the wood, unlocked the door with a hasty wrench, slammed it after him, pitched *Zeluco* into the most distant corner, and, thrusting his right hand into his pocket, first walked four or five times up and down the scanty length of the little room, and then seated himself on the ottoman in an uncomfortable, stiff way, as we often do when we wish not to abandon ourselves to feeling.

He was getting in love with Hetty—that was quite plain. He was ready to pitch everything else—no matter where—for the sake of surrendering himself to this delicious feeling which has just disclosed itself. It was no use blinking the fact now—they would get too fond of each other if he went on taking notice of her, and what would come of it ? He should have to go away in a few weeks, and the poor little thing would be miserable. He *must not* see her alone again ; he must keep out of her way. What a fool he was for coming back from Gawaine's !

He got up and threw open the windows to let in the soft breath of the afternoon and the healthy scent of the firs that made a belt round the Hermitage. The soft air did not help his resolutions, as he leaned out and looked into the leafy distance. But he considered his resolution sufficiently fixed ; there was no need to debate with himself any longer. He had made up his mind not to meet Hetty again ; and now he might give himself up to thinking how immensely agreeable it would have been to meet her this evening as she came back, and put his arm round her again and look into her sweet face. He wondered if the dear little thing were thinking of him too—twenty to one she was. How beautiful her eyes were with the tear on their lashes ! He would like to satisfy his soul for a day with looking at them, and he *must* see her again ; he must see her simply to remove any false impression from

her mind about his manner to her just now. He would behave in a quiet, kind way to her—just to prevent her from going home with her head full of wrong fancies. Yes, that would be the best thing to do, after all.

It was a long while—more than an hour—before Arthur had brought his meditations to this point; but once arrived there, he could stay no longer at the Hermitage. The time must be filled up with movement until he should see Hetty again. And it was already late enough to go and dress for dinner, for his grandfather's dinner-hour was six.

CHAPTER XIII.

EVENING IN THE WOOD.

It happened that Mrs. Pomfret had had a slight quarrel with Mrs. Best, the housekeeper, on this Thursday morning—a fact which had two consequences highly convenient to Hetty. It caused Mrs. Pomfret to have tea sent up to her own room, and it inspired that exemplary lady's maid with so lively a recollection of former passages in Mrs. Best's conduct, and of dialogues in which Mrs. Best had decidedly the inferiority as an interlocutor with Mrs. Pomfret, that Hetty required no more presence of mind than was demanded for using her needle and throwing in an occasional "yes" or "no." She would have wanted to put on her hat earlier than usual; only she had told Captain Donnithorne that she usually set out about eight o'clock, and if he *should* go to the Grove again expecting to see her, and she should be gone! Would he come? Her little butterfly soul fluttered incessantly between memory and dubious expectation. At last the minute-hand of the old-fashioned brazen-faced time-piece was on the last quarter to eight, and there was every reason for its being time to get ready for departure. Even Mrs. Pomfret's preoccupied mind did not prevent her from noticing what looked like a new flush of beauty in the little thing as she tied on her hat before the looking-glass.

"That child gets prettier and prettier every day, I do believe," was her inward comment. "The more's the pity. She'll get neither a place nor a husband any the sooner for it."

Sober well-to-do men don't like such pretty wives. When I was a girl, I was more admired than if I'd been so very pretty. However, she's reason to be gratified to me for teaching her something to get her bread with, better than farmhouse work. They always told me I was good-natured—and that's the truth, and to my hurt too, else there's them in this house that wouldn't be here now to lord it over me in the housekeeper's room."

Hetty walked hastily across the short space of pleasure-ground which she had to traverse, dreading to meet Mr. Craig, to whom she could hardly have spoken civilly. How relieved she was when she had got safely under the oaks and among the fern of the Chase! Even then she was as ready to be startled as the deer that leaped away at her approach. She thought nothing of the evening light that lay gently in the grassy alleys between the fern, and made the beauty of their living green more visible than it had been in the overpowering flood of noon; she thought of nothing that was present. She only saw something that was possible: Mr. Arthur Donnithorne coming to meet her again along the Fir-tree Grove. That was the foreground of Hetty's picture; behind it lay a bright hazy something—days that were not to be as the other days of her life had been. It was as if she had been wooed by a river-god, who might any time take her to his wondrous halls below a watery heaven. There was no knowing what would come since this strange entrancing delight had come. If a chest full of lace, and satin, and jewels had been sent her from some unknown source, how could she but have thought that her whole lot was going to change, and that to-morrow some still more bewildering joy would befall her? Hetty had never read a novel; how then could she find a shape for her expectations? They were as formless as the sweet languid odors of the garden at the Chase, which had floated past her as she walked by the gate.

She is at another gate now—that leading into Fir-tree Grove. She enters the wood, where it is already twilight, and at every step she takes the fear at her heart becomes colder. If he should not come! Oh, how dreary it was—the thought of going out at the other end of the wood, into the unsheltered road without having seen him. She reaches the first turning toward the Hermitage, walking slowly—he is not there. She hates the leveret that runs across the path; she hates everything that is not what she longs for. She walks on, happy whenever she is coming to a bend in the road, for

perhaps he is behind it. No. She is beginning to cry ; her heart has swelled so, the tears stand in her eyes ; she gives one great sob, while the corners of her mouth quiver, and the tears roll down.

She doesn't know that there is another turning to the Hermitage, that she is close against it, and that Arthur Donnithrone is only a few yards from her, full of one thought, and a thought of which she is the only object. He is going to see Hetty again—that is the longing which has been growing through the last three hours to a feverish thirst. Not, of course, to speak in the caressing way into which he had unguardedly fallen before dinner, but to set things right with her by a kindness which would have the air of friendly civility, and prevent her from running away with wrong notions about their mutual relation.

If Hetty had known he was there, she would not have cried ; and it would have been better ; for then Arthur would perhaps have behaved as wisely as he had intended. As it was, she started when he appeared at the end of the side alley, and looked up at him with two great drops rolling down her cheeks. What else could he do but speak to her in a soft, soothing tone, as if she were a bright-eyed spaniel with a thorn in her foot ?

“ Has something frightened you, Hetty ? Have you seen anything in the wood ? Don't be frightened—I'll take care of you now.”

Hetty was blushing so, she didn't know whether she was happy or miserable. To be crying again—what did gentlemen think of girls who cried in that way ? She felt unable even to say “ No,” but could only look away from him, and wipe the tears from her cheek. Not before a great drop had fallen on her rose-colored strings : she knew that quite well.

“ Come, be cheerful again. Smile at me, and tell me what is the matter. Come, tell me.”

Hetty turning her head toward him, whispered, “ I thought you wouldn't come,” and slowly got courage to lift her eyes to him. That look was too much ; he must have had eyes of Egyptian granite not to look too lovingly in return.

“ You little frightened bird ! little tearful rose ! silly pet ! You won't cry again, now I'm with you, will you ? ”

Ah ! he doesn't know in the least what he is saying. This is not what he meant to say. His arm is stealing round the waist again, it is tightening its clasp ; he is bending his face nearer and nearer to the round cheek, his lips are meeting those

pouting child-lips, and, for a long moment, time has vanished. He may be a shepherd in Arcadia for aught he knows, he may be the first youth kissing the first maiden, he may be Eros himself, sipping the lips of Psyche—it is all one.

There was no speaking for minutes after. They walked along with beating hearts till they came within sight of the gate at the end of the wood. Then they looked at each other, not quite as they had looked before, for in their eyes, there was the memory of a kiss.

But already something bitter had begun to mingle itself with the fountain of sweets ; already Arthur was uncomfortable. He took his arm from Hetty's waist, and said,

"Here we are almost at the end of the Grove. I wonder how late it is," he added, pulling out his watch. "Twenty minutes past eight—but my watch is too fast. However, I'd better not go any farther now. Trot along quickly with your little feet, and get home safely. Good-by."

He took her hand, and looked at her half sadly, half with a constrained smile. Hetty's eyes seemed to beseech him not to go away yet ; but he patted her cheek and said "Good-by," again. She was obliged to turn away from him and go on.

As for Arthur, he rushed back through the wood as if he wanted to put a wide space between himself and Hetty. He would not go to the Hermitage again ; he remembered how he had debated with himself there before dinner, and it had all come to nothing—worse than nothing. He walked right on into the Chase, glad to get out of the Grove, which surely was haunted by his evil genius. Those beeches and smooth limes—there was something enervating in the very sight of them ; but the strong knotted old oaks had no bending languor in them—the sight of them would give a man some energy. Arthur lost himself among the narrow openings in the fern, winding about without seeking any issue, till the twilight deepened almost to night under the great boughs, and the hare looked black as it darted across his path.

He was feeling much more strongly than he had done in the morning ; it was as if his horse had wheeled round from a leap, and dared to dispute his mastery. He was dissatisfied with himself, irritated, mortified. He no sooner fixed his mind on the probable consequences of giving way to the emotions which had stolen over him to-day—of continuing to notice Hetty, of allowing himself any opportunity for such slight caresses as he had been betrayed into already—than he refused to believe such a future possible for himself. To flirt with

Hetty was a very different affair from flirting with a pretty girl of his own station—that was understood to be an amusement on both sides ; or, if it became serious, there was no obstacle to marriage. But this little thing would be spoken ill of directly, if she happened to be seen walking with him ; and then those excellent people, the Poysers, to whom a good name was as precious as if they had the best blood in the land in their veins—he should hate himself if he should make a scandal of that sort, on the estate that was to be his own some day, and among tenants by whom he liked, above all, to be respected. He could no more believe that he should so fall in his own esteem than that he should break both his legs and go on crutches all the rest of his life. He couldn't imagine himself in that position—it was too odious, too unlike him.

And, even if no one knew anything about it, they might get too fond of each other, and then there could be nothing but the misery of parting, after all. N gentleman, out of a ballad, could marry a farmer's niece. There must be an end to the whole thing at once. It was too foolish.

And yet he had been so determined this morning, before he went to Gawaine's ; and while he was there something had taken hold of him and made him gallop back. It seemed he couldn't quite depend on his own resolution, as he had thought he could ; he almost wished his arm would get painful again, and then he should think of nothing but the comfort it would be to get rid of the pain. There was no knowing what impulse might seize him to-morrow, in this confounded place, where there was nothing to occupy him imperiously through the live-long day. What could he do to secure himself from any more of this folly ?

There was but one resource. He would go and tell Irwine—tell him everything. The mere act of telling it would make it seem trivial ; the temptation would vanish, as the charm of fond words vanishes when one repeats them to the indifferent. In every way it would help him, to tell Irwine. He would ride to Broxton Rectory the first thing after breakfast to-morrow.

Arthur had no sooner come to this determination than he began to think which of the paths would lead him home, and made as short a walk thither as he could. He felt sure he should sleep now ; he had had enough to tire him, and there was no more need for him to think.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RETURN HOME.

WHILE that parting in the wood was happening, there was a parting in the cottage too, and Lisbeth had stood with Adam at the door, straining her aged eyes to get the last glimpse of Seth and Dinah as they mounted the opposite slope.

"Eh! I'm loath to see the last on her," she said to Adam, as they turned into the house again. "I'd ha' been willin' t' ha her about me till I died and went to lie by my old man. She'd make it easier dyin'—she spakes so gentle an' moves about so still. I could be fast sure that pictur' was drawed for her i' thy new Bible—th' angel a-sittin' on the big stone by the grave. Eh! I wouldna mind ha'in' a daughter like that; but nobody ne'er marries them as is good for aught."

"Well, mother, I hope thee wilt have her for a daughter; for Seth's got a liking for her, and I hope she'll get a liking for Seth in time."

"Where's th' use o' talkin' a-that'n? She caresna for Seth. She's goin' away twenty mile aff. How's she to get a likin' for 'm, I'd like to know? No more nor the cake 'ull come wi'out th' leaven. Thy figurin' books might ha' tould thee better nor that, I should think, else thee might'st as well read the commin print, as Seth allays does."

"Nay, mother," said Adam, laughing, "the figures tell us a fine deal, and we couldn't go far without 'em, but they don't tell us about folks's feelings. It's a nicer job to calculate *them*. But Seth's as good-hearted a lad as ever handled a tool, and plenty o' sense, and good-looking too; and he's got the same way o' thinking as Dinah. He deserves to win her, though there's no denying she's a rare bit o' workmanship. You don't see such women turned off the wheel every day."

"Eh! thee't allays stick up for thy brother. Thee'st been just the same, e'er sin' ye war little uns together. Thee wart allays for halving ivery thing wi' 'm. But what's Seth got to do with marr'in', as is on'y three-an'-twenty? He'd more need t' learn an' lay by sixpence. An' as for his deservin' her—she's two 'ear older nor Seth; she's pretty near as old as thee. But that's the way: folks mun allays choose by contrairies, as

if they must be sorted like the pork—a bit o' good meat wi' a bit o' offal."

To the feminine mind, in some of its moods, all things that might be, receive a temporary charm from comparison with what is; and since Adam did not want to marry Dinah himself, Lisbeth felt rather peevish on that score—as peevish as she would have been if he *had* wanted to marry her, and so shut himself out from Mary Burge and the partnership as effectually as by marrying Hetty.

It was more than half past eight when Adam and his mother were talking in this way, so that when, about ten minutes later, Hetty reached the turning of the lane that led to the farm-yard gate, she saw Dinah and Seth approaching it from the opposite direction, and waited for them to come up to her. They, too, like Hetty, had lingered a little in their walk, for Dinah was trying to speak words of comfort and strength to Seth in these parting moments. But when they saw Hetty, they paused and shook hands: Seth turned homeward, and Dinah came on alone.

"Seth Bede would have come and spoken to you, my dear," she said, as she reached Hetty, "but he's very full of trouble to night."

Hetty answered with a dimpled smile, as if she did not quite know what had been said; and it made a strange contrast to see that sparkling, self-engrossed loveliness looked at by Dinah's calm, pitying face, with its open glance which told that her heart lived in no cherished secrets of its own, but in feelings which it longed to share with all the world. Hetty liked Dinah as well as she had ever liked any woman; how was it possible to feel otherwise toward one who always put in a kind word for her when her aunt was finding fault, and who was always ready to take Totty off her hands—little, tiresome Totty, that was made such a pet of by every one, and that Hetty could see no interest in at all? Dinah had never said anything disapproving or reproachful to Hetty during her whole visit to the Hall Farm; she had talked to her a great deal in a serious way, but Hetty didn't mind that much, for she never listened; whatever Dinah might say, she almost always stroked Hetty's cheek after it, and wanted to do some mending for her. Dinah was a riddle to her; Hetty looked at her much in the same way as one might imagine a little perching bird, that could only flutter from bough to bough, to look at the swoop of the swallow or the mounting of the lark; but she did not care to solve such riddles, any

more than she cared to know what was meant by the pictures in the "Pilgrim's Progress," r in the old folio Bible that Marty and Tommy always plagued her about on Sunday.

Dinah took her hand now and drew it under her own arm.

"You look very happy to-night, dear child," she said. "I shall think of you often when I'm at Snowfield, and see your face before me as it is now. It's a strange thing—sometimes when I'm quite alone, sitting in my room with my eyes closed, or walking over the hills, the people I've seen and known, if it's only been for a few days, are brought before me, and I hear their voices and see them look and move, almost plainer than I ever did when they were really with me so as I could touch them. And then my heart is drawn out toward them, and I feel their lot as if it was my own, and I take comfort in spreading it before the Lord and resting in his love, on their behalf as well as my own. And so I feel sure you will come before me."

She paused a moment, but Hetty said nothing.

"It has been a very precious time to me," Dinah went on, "last night and to day—seeing two such good sons as Adam and Seth Bede. They are so tender and thoughtful for their aged mother. And she has been telling me what Adam has done, for these many years, to help his father and his brother: it's wonderful what a spirit of wisdom and knowledge he has, and how he's ready to use it all in behalf of them that are feeble. And I'm sure he has a loving spirit too. I've noticed it often among my own people round Snowfield, that the strong, skilful men are often the gentlest to the women and children; and it's pretty to see 'em carrying the little babies as if they were no heavier than little birds. And the babies always seem to like the strong arm best. I feel sure it would be so with Adam Bede. Don't you think so, Hetty?"

"Yes," said Hetty, abstractedly, for her mind had been all the while in the wood, and she would have found it difficult to say what she was assenting to. Dinah saw she was not inclined to talk, but there would not have been time to say much more, for they were now at the yard-gate.

The still twilight, with its dying western red, and its few faint struggling stars, rested on the farm-yard, where there was not a sound to be heard but the stamping of the cart-horses in the stable. It was about twenty minutes after sunset; the fowls were all gone to roost, and the bull-dog lay stretched on the straw outside his kennel, with the black-and-

tan terrier by his side, when the falling-to of the gate disturbed them, and set them barking, like good officials, before they had any distinct knowledge of the reason.

The barking had its effect in the house ; for, as Dinah and Hetty approached, the doorway was filled by a portly figure, with a ruddy, black-eyed face, which bore in it the possibility of looking extremely acute, and occasionally contemptuous, on market-days, but had now a predominant after-supper expression of hearty good-nature. It is well known that great scholars who have shown the most pitiless acerbity in their criticism of other men's scholarship have yet been of a relenting and indulgent temper in private life ; and I have heard of a learned man meekly rocking the twins in the cradle with his left hand, while with his right he inflicted the most lacerating sarcasms on an opponent who had betrayed a brutal ignorance of Hebrew. Weaknesses and errors must be forgiven—alas ! they are not alien to us—but the man who takes the wrong side on the momentous subject of the Hebrew points must be treated as the enemy of his race. There was the same sort of antithetic mixture in Martin Poyser ; he was of so excellent a disposition that he had been kinder and more respectful than ever to his old father since he had made a deed of gift of all his property, and no man judged his neighbors more charitably on all personal matters ; but for a farmer, like Luke Britton, for example, whose fallows were not well cleaned, who didn't know the rudiments of hedging and ditching, and showed but a small share of judgment in the purchase of winter stock, Martin Poyser was as hard and implacable as the north-east wind. Luke Britton could not make a remark, even on the weather, but Martin Poyser detected in it a taint of that unsoundness and general ignorance which was palpable in all his farming operations. He hated to see the fellow lift the pewter pint to his mouth in the bar of the Royal George on market-day, and the mere sight of him on the other side of the road brought a severe and critical expression into his black eyes, as different as possible from the fatherly glance he bent on his two nieces as they approached the door. Mr. Poyser had smoked his evening pipe, and now held his hands in his pockets, as the only resource of a man who continues to sit up after the day's business is done.

"Why, lasses, ye're rather late to-night," he said, when they reached the little gate leading into the causeway. "The mother's begun to fidget about you, an' she's got the little un

ill. An' how did you leave th' old woman Bede, Dinah? Is she much down about th' old man? He'd been but a poor bargain to her this five year."

"She's been greatly distressed for the loss of him," said Dinah, "but she's seemed more comforted to day. Her son Adam's been at home all day, working at his father's coffin, and she loves to have him at home. She's been talking about him to me almost all the day. She has a loving heart, though she's sorely given to fret and be fearful. I wish she had a surer trust to comfort her in her old age."

"Adam's sure enough," said Mr. Poyser, misunderstanding Dinah's wish. "There's no fear but he'll yield well i' the threshing. He's not one o' them as is all straw and no grain. I'll be bond for him any day, as he'll be a good son to the last. Did he say he'd be coming to see us soon? But come in, come in," he added, making way for them; "I hadn't need keep y' out any longer."

The tall buildings round the yard shut out a good deal of the sky, but the large window let in abundant light to show every corner of the house-place.

Mrs. Poyser, seated in the rocking-chair, which had been brought out of the "right-hand parlor," was trying to soothe Totty to sleep. But Totty was not disposed to sleep; and when her cousins entered, she raised herself up, and showed a pair of flushed cheeks, which looked fatter than ever now they were defined by the edge of her linen night-cap.

In the large wicker-bottomed arm-chair in the left-hand chimney-nook sat old Martin Poyser, a hale but shrunk and bleached image of his portly black-haired son—his head hanging forward a little, and his elbows pushed backward so as to allow the whole of his fore-arm to rest on the arm of the chair. His blue handkerchief was spread over his knees, as was usual in-doors, when it was not hanging over his head; and he sat watching what went forward with the quiet *outward* glance of healthy old age, which, disengaged from any interest in an inward drama, spies out pins upon the floor, follows one's minutest motions with an unexpectant purposeless tenacity, watches the flickering of the flame or the sun-gleams on the wall, counts the quarries on the floor, watches even the hand of the clock, and pleases itself with detecting a rhythm in the tick.

"What a time o' night this is to come home, Hetty," said Mrs. Poyser. "Look at the clock, do; why, it's going on for half-past nine, an' I've sent the gells to bed this half

hour, and late enough too, when they've got to get up at half after four, and the mowers' bottles to fill, and the baking; and here's this blessed child wi' the fever for what I know, and as wakeful as if it was dinner-time, and nobody to help me give her the physic but your uncle, and fine work there's been, and half of it spilt on her night-gown—it's well if she's swallowed more nor'ull make her worse i'stead o' better. But folks as have no mind to be o' use, have allays the luck to be out o' the road when there's anything to be done."

"I did set out before eight, aunt," said Hetty, in a pettish tone, with a slight toss of her head. "But this clock s so much before the clock at the Chase, there's no telling what time it'll be when I get here."

"What, you'd be wanting the clock set by gentlefolks' time, would you? an' sit up burnin' candle, an' lie abed wi' the sun a-bakin' you, like a cucumber i' the frame? The clock hasn't been put forrard for the first time to-day, I reckon."

The fact was, Hetty had really forgotten the difference of the clocks when she told Captain Donnithorne that she set out at eight, and this, with her lingering pace, had made her nearly half an hour later than usual. But here her aunt's attention was diverted from the tender subject by Totty, who, perceiving at length that the arrival of her cousins was not likely to bring anything satisfactory to her in particular, began to cry, "Munny, munny," in an explosive manner.

"Well, then, my pet, mother's got her, mother won't leave her; Totty be a good dilling, and go to sleep now," said Mrs. Poyser, leaning back and rocking the chair, while she tried to make Totty nestle against her. But Totty only cried louder and said, "don't yock!" So the mother, with that wondrous patience which love gives to the quickest temperament, sat up again, and pressed her cheek against the linen night-cap and kissed it and forgot to scold Hetty any longer.

"Come, Hetty," said Martin Poyser, in a conciliatory tone, go and get your supper 'i the pantry, as the things are all put away; an' then you can come an' take the little un while your aunt undresses herself, for she won't lie down in bed without her mother. An' I reckon *you* could eat a bit, Dinah, for they don't keep much of a house down there."

"No, thank you, uncle," said Dinah; "I ate a good meal before I came away, for Mrs. Bede would make a kettle-cake for me."

"I don't want any supper," said Hetty, taking off her hat. "I can hold Totty now, if aunt wants me."

"Why, what nonsense that is to talk," said Mrs. Poyser. "Do you think you can live wi'out eatin', an' nourish your inside wi' stickin' red ribbins on your head? Go an' get your supper this minute, child; there's a nice bit o' cold pudding i' the safe—just what you're fond on."

Hetty complied silently by going toward the pantry, and Mrs. Poyser went on, speaking to Dinah.

"Sit down, my dear, an' look as if you knowed what it was to make yourself a bit comfortable i' the world. I warrant the old woman was glad to see you, since you staid so long?"

"She seemed to like having me there at last; but her sons say she doesn't like young women about her, commonly; and I thought just at first she was almost angry with me for going."

"Eh! it's a poor look-out when th'ould foulks doesna like the young 'uns," said old Martin, bending his head down lower, and seeming to trace the pattern of the quarries with his eye.

"Ay, it's ill livin' in a hen-roost for them as doesn't like fleas," said Mrs. Poyser. "We've all had our turn at bein' young, I reckon, be't good luck or ill."

"But she must learn to 'commodate herself to young women," said Mr. Poyser, "for it isn't to be counted on as Adam and Seth 'ull keep bachelors for the next ten year to please their mother. That 'ud be onreasonable. It isn't right for old nor young naythur to make a bargain all their own side. What's good for one's good all round, i' the long run. I'm no friend to young fellows a-marr'ing afore they know the difference atween a crab an' a apple; but they may wait o'er long."

"To be sure," said Mrs. Poyser; "if you go past your dinner-time there'll be little relish o' your meat. You turn it o'er an' o'er wi' your fork, an' don't eat it after all. You'nd fau't wi' your meat, an' the fau't's all i' your own stomach."

Hetty now came back from the pantry, and said, "I can take Totty now, aunt, if you like."

"Come, Rachel," said Mr. Poyser, as his wife seemed to hesitate, seeing that Totty was at last nestling quietly, "thee'dst better let Hetty carry her up stairs, while thee tak'st thy things off. Thee't tired. It's time thee wast in bed. Thee't bring on the pain in thy side again."

"Well, she may hold her if the child 'll go to her," said Mrs. Poyser.

Hetty went close to the rocking-chair and stood without her usual smile, and without any attempt to entice Totty, simply waiting for her aunt to give the child into her hands.

"Wilt go to Cousin Hetty, my dilling, while mother gets ready to go to bed? Then Totty shall go into mother's bed and sleep there all night."

Before her mother had done speaking, Totty had given her answer in an unmistakable manner, by knitting her brow, setting her tiny teeth against her under lip, and leaning forward to slap Hetty on the arm with her utmost force. Then, without speaking, she nestled to her mother again.

"Hey! hey!" said Mr. Poyser, while Hetty stood without moving, "not go to Cousin Hetty? That's like a babby; Totty's a little woman, an' not a babby."

"It's no use tryin' to persuade her," said Mr. Poyser. "She allays takes against Hetty when she isn't well. Happen she'll go to Dinah."

Dinah, having taken off her bonnet and shawl, had hitherto kept quietly seated in the background, not liking to thrust herself between Hetty and what was considered Hetty's proper work. But now she came forward, and, putting out her arms, said, "Come, Totty, come and let Dinah carry her up stairs along with mother; poor, poor mother! she's so tired—she wants to go to bed."

Totty turned her face toward Dinah, and looked at her all instant, then lifted herself up, put out her little arms, and let Dinah lift her from her mother's lap. Hetty turned away without any sign of ill-humor, and, taking her hat from the table, stood waiting with an air of indifference, to see if she should be told to do anything else.

"You may make the door fast now, Poyser; Alick's been come in this long while," said Mrs. Poyser, rising with an appearance of relief from her low chair. "Get me the matches down, Hetty, for I must have the rushlight burning i' my room. Come, father."

The heavy wooden bolts began to roll in the house doors, and old Martin prepared to move, by gathering up his blue handkerchief, and reaching his bright knobbed walnut-tree stick from the corner. Mrs. Poyser then led the way out of the kitchen, followed by the grandfather, and Dinah with Totty in her arms—all going to bed by twilight, like the birds. Mrs. Poyser, on her way, peeped into the room

where her two boys lay, just to see their ruddy round cheeks on the pillow, and to hear for a moment their light, regular breathing.

"Come, Hetty, get to bed," said Mr. Poyser, in a soothing tone, as he himself turned to go up stairs. "You didna mean to be late, I'll be bound ; but your aunt's been worried to-day. Good-night, my wench, good-night."

CHAPTER XV.

THE TWO BED-CHAMBERS.

HETTY and Dinah both slept in the second story, in rooms adjoining each other, meagrely-furnished rooms, with no blinds to shut out the light, which was now beginning to gather new strength from the rising of the moon—more than enough strength to enable Hetty to move about and undress with perfect comfort. She could see quite well the pegs in the old painted linen-press on which she hung her hat and gown ; she could see the head of every pin on her red cloth pin-cushion ; she could see a reflection of herself in the old-fashioned looking-glass, quite as distinct as was needful, considering that she had only to brush her hair and put on her night cap. A queer old looking-glass ! Hetty got into an ill-temper with it almost every time she dressed. It had been considered a handsome glass in its day, and had probably been bought into the Poyser family a quarter of a century before, at a sale of genteel household furniture. Even now an auctioneer could say something for it ; it had a firm mahogany base, well supplied with drawers, which opened with a decided jerk, and sent the contents leaping out from the farthest corners, without giving you the trouble of reaching them ; above all, it had a brass candle-socket on each side, which would give it an aristocratic air to the very last. But Hetty objected to it because it had numerous dim blotches sprinkled over the mirror, which no rubbing would remove, and because, instead of swinging backward and forward, it was fixed in an upright position, so that she could only get one good view of her head and neck, and that was to be had

Only by sitting down on a low chair before her dressing-table. And the dressing-table was no dressing-table at all, but a small old chest of drawers, the most awkward thing in the world to sit down before, for the big brass handles quite hurt her knees, and she couldn't get near the glass at all comfortably. But devout worshippers never allow inconveniences to prevent them from performing their religious rites, and Hetty this evening was more bent on her peculiar form of worship than usual.

Having taken off her gown and white 'kerchief, she drew a key from the large pocket that hung outside her petticoat, and unlocking one of the lower drawers in the chest, reached from it two short bits of wax candle—secretly bought at Treddleston—and stuck them in the two brass sockets. Then she drew forth a bundle of matches, and lighted the candles; and last of all, a small red-framed shilling looking-glass, without blotches. It was into this small glass that she chose to look first after seating herself. She looked into it, smiling, and turning her head on one side, for a minute, then laid it down and took out her brush and comb from an upper drawer. She was going to let down her hair, and make herself look like that picture of a lady in Miss Lydia Donnithorne's dressing-room. It was soon done, and the dark hyacinthine curves fell on her neck. It was not heavy, massive, merely rippling hair, but soft and silken, running at every opportunity into delicate rings. But she pushed it all backward, to look like the picture, and form a dark curtain, throwing into relief her round white neck. Then she put down her brush and comb, and looked at herself, folding her arms before her, still like the picture. Even the old mottled glass couldn't help sending back a lovely image, none the less lovely because Hetty's stays were not of white satin—such as I feel sure heroines must generally wear—but of a dark greenish cotton texture.

Oh yes! she was very pretty; Captain Donnithorne thought so. Prettier than any body about Hayslope—prettier than any of the ladies she had ever seen visiting at the Chase—indeed it seemed fine ladies were rather old and ugly—and prettier than Miss Bacon, the miller's daughter, who was called the beauty of Treddleston. And Hetty looked at herself to-night with quite a different sensation from what she had ever felt before; there was an invisible spectator whose eye rested on her like morning on the flowers. His soft voice was saying over and over again those pretty things

she had heard in the wood ; his arm was round her, and the delicate rose-scent of his hair was with her still. The vainest woman is never thoroughly conscious of her own beauty till she is loved by the man who sets her own passion vibrating in return.

But Hetty seemed to have made up her mind that something was wanting, for she got up and reached an old black lace scarf out of the linen-press, and a pair of large earrings out of the sacred drawer from which she had taken her candles. It was an old, old scarf, full of rents, but it would make a becoming border round her shoulders, and set off the whiteness of her upper arm. And she would take out the little earrings she had in her ears—oh, how her aunt had scolded her for having her ears bored ! and put in those large ones ; they were but colored glass and gilding ; but, if you didn't know what they were made of, they looked just as well as what the ladies wore. And so she sat down again, with the large earrings in her ears, and the black lace scarf adjusted round her shoulders. She looked down at her arms ; no arms could be prettier down to a little way below the elbow—they were white and plump, and dimpled to match her cheeks ; but towards the wrist she thought with vexation that they were coarsened by butter-making, and other work that ladies never did.

Captain Donnithorne couldn't like her to go on doing work ; he would like to see her in nice clothes, and thin shoes and white stockings, perhaps with silk clocks to them ; for he must love her very much—no one else had ever put his arm around her and kissed her in that way. He would want to marry her, and make a lady of her—she could hardly dare to shape the thought—yet how else could it be ? Marry her quite secretly, as Mr. James, the doctor's assistant, married the doctor's niece, and nobody ever found it out for a long while after, and then it was of no use to be angry. The doctor had told her aunt all about it in Hetty's hearing. She didn't know how it would be, but it was quite plain the old squire could never be told anything about it, for Hetty was ready to faint with awe and fright if she came across him at the Chase. He might have been earth-born, for what she knew ; it had never entered her mind that he had been young like other men—he had always been the old squire at whom everybody was frightened. Oh, it was impossible to think how it would be ! But Captain Donnithorne would know ; he was a great gentleman, and could have his way in every-

thing, and could buy everything he liked. And nothing could be as it had been again ; perhaps some day she should be a grand lady and ride in her coach, and dress for dinner in a brocaded silk, with feathers in her hair and her dress sweeping the ground, like Miss Lydia and Lady Dacey, when she saw them going into the dining-room one evening, as she peeped through the little round window in the lobby ; only she should not be old and ugly like Miss Lydia, or all the same the thickness like Lady Dacey, but very pretty, with her hair done in a great many different ways, and sometimes in a pink dress, and sometimes in a white one—she didn't know which she liked best ; and Mary Burge and everybody would perhaps see her going out in her carriage—or rather, they would *hear* of it ; it was impossible to imagine these things happening at Hayslope in sight of her aunt. At the thought of all this splendor, Hetty got up from her chair, and in doing so caught the little red-framed glass with the edge of her scarf, so that it fell with a bang on the floor ; but she was too eagerly occupied with her vision to care about picking it up ; and after a momentary start, began to pace with a pigeon-like stateliness backward and forward along her room, in her colored stays and colored skirt, and the old black lace scarf round her shoulders, and the great glass earrings in her ears.

How pretty the little puss looks in that odd dress ! It would be the easiest folly in the world to fall in love with her ; there is such a sweet, babylike roundness about her face and figure ; the delicate dark rings of hair lie so charmingly about her ears and neck ; her great dark eyes, with their long eyelashes, touch one so strangely, as if an imprisoned, frisky sprite looked out of them.

Ah ! what a prize a man gets who wins a sweet bride like Hetty. How the men envy him who come to the wedding breakfast and see her hanging on his arm in her white lace and orange blossoms. The dear, young, round, soft, flexible thing ! Her heart must be just as soft, her temper just as free from angles, her character just as pliant. If anything ever goes wrong, it must be the husband's fault there ; he can make her what he likes, that is plain. And the lover himself thinks so too ; the little darling is so fond of him, her little vanities are so bewitching, he wouldn't consent to her being a bit wiser ; those kitten-like glances and movements are just what one wants to make one's hearth a paradise. Every man under such circumstances is conscious of being a great physiognomist. Nature, he knows, has a language of her own,

which she uses with strict veracity, and he considers himself an adept in the language. Nature has written out his bride's character for him in those exquisite lines of cheek and lip and chin, in those eyelids delicate as petals, in those long lashes curled like the stamen of a flower, in the dark, liquid depths of those wonderful eyes. How she will dote on her children! She is almost a child herself, and the little, pink, round things will hang about her like florets round the central flower; and the husband will look on, smiling benignly, able whenever he chooses to withdraw into the sanctuary of his wisdom, toward which his sweet wife will look reverently, and never lift the curtain. It is a marriage such as they made in the golden age, when the men were all wise and majestic, and the women all lovely and loving.

It was very much in this way that our friend Adam Bede thought about Hetty; only he put his thoughts into very different words. If ever she behaved with cold vanity toward him, he said to himself, it is only because she doesn't love me well enough; and he was sure that her love, whenever she gave it, would be the most precious thing a man could possess on earth. Before you despise Adam as deficient in penetration, pray ask yourself if you were ever predisposed to believe evil of any pretty woman—if you ever *could*, without hard head-breaking demonstration, believe evil of the *one* supremely pretty woman who has bewitched you. No; people who love downy peaches are apt not to think of the stone, and sometimes jar their teeth terribly against it.

Arthur Donnithorne, too, had the same sort of notion about Hetty, so far as he had thought of her nature at all. He felt sure she was a dear, affectionate, good little thing. The man who awakes the wondering, tremulous passion of a young girl always thinks her affectionate; and if he chances to look forward to future years, probably imagines himself being virtuously tender to her, because the poor thing is so clingingly fond of him. God made these dear women so—and it is a convenient arrangement in case of sickness.

After all, I believe the wisest of us must be beguiled in this way sometimes, and must think both better and worse of people than they deserve. Nature has her language, and she is not unveracious; but we don't know all the intricacies of her syntax just yet, and in a hasty reading we may happen to extract the very opposite of her real meaning. Long dark eyelashes now; what can be more exquisite? I find it impossible not to expect some depth of soul behind a deep gray

eye with a long dark eyelash, in spite of an experience which has shown me that they go along with deceit, speculation, and stupidity. But if, in the reaction of disgust, I have betaken myself to a fishy eye, there has been a surprising similarity of result. One begins to suspect at length that there is no direct correlation between eyelashes and morals, or else that the eyelashes express the disposition of the fair one's grandmother, which is, on the whole, less important to us.

No eyelashes could be more beautiful than Hetty's ; and now, while she walks with her pigeon-like stateliness along the room, and looks down on her shoulders bordered by the old black lace, the dark fringe shows to perfection on her pink cheek. They are but dim, ill-defined pictures that her narrow bit of an imagination can make of the future ; but of every picture she is the central figure, in fine clothes. Captain Donnithorne is very close to her, putting his arm round her, perhaps kissing her, and everybody else is admiring and envying her, especially Mary Burge, whose new print dress looks very contemptible by the side of Hetty's resplendent toilet. Does any sweet or sad memory mingle with this dream of the future—any loving thought of her second parents—of the children she had helped to tend—of any youthful companion, any pet animal, any relic of her own childhood even ? Not one. There are some plants that have hardly any roots ; you may tear them from their native nook of rock or wall, and just lay them over your ornamental flour-pot, and they blossom none the worse. Hetty could have cast all her past life behind her, and never cared to be reminded of it again. I think she had no feeling at all toward the old house, and did not like the Jacob's Ladder and the long row of hollyhocks in the garden better than other flowers—perhaps not so well. It was wonderful how little she seemed to care about waiting on her uncle, who had been a good father to her ; she hardly ever remembered to reach him his pipe at the right time without being told, unless a visitor happened to be there, who would have a better opportunity of seeing her as she walked across the hearth. Hetty did not understand how anybody could be very fond of middle-aged people. And as for those tiresome children, Marty, and Tommy, and Totty, they had been the very nuisance of her life—as bad as buzzing insects that will come teasing you on a hot day when you want to be quiet. Marty, the eldest, was a baby when she first came to the farm, for the children born before him had died, and so Hetty had had them all three, one after the other, toddling

by her side in the meadow, or playing about her on wet days in the half-empty rooms of the large old house. The boys were out of hand now, but Totty was still a day-long plague, worse than either of the others had been, because there was more fuss made about her. And there was no end to the making and mending of clothes. Hetty would have been glad to hear that she should never see a child again ; they were worse than the nasty little lambs that the shepherd was always bringing in to de take special care of in lambing time, for the lambs *were* got rid of sooner or later. As for the young chickens and turkeys, Hetty would have hated the very word "hatching" if her aunt had not bribed her to attend to the young poultry by promising her the proceeds of one out of every brood. The round downy chicks peeping out from under their mother's wing never touched Hetty with any pleasure ; that was not the sort of prettiness she cared about ; but she did care about the prettiness of the new things she would buy for herself at Treddleston fair with the money they fetched. And yet she looked so dimpled, so charming, as she stooped down to put the soaked bread under the hen-coop, that you must have been a very acute personage indeed to suspect her of that hardness. Molly, the housemaid, with a turn-up nose and a protuberant jaw, was really a tender-hearted girl, and, as Mrs. Poyser said, a jewel to look after the poultry ; but her stolid face showed nothing of this maternal delight any more than a brown earthenware pitcher will show the light of the lamp within it.

It is generally a feminine eye that first detects the moral deficiencies hidden under the "dear deceit" of beauty ; so it is not surprising that Mrs. Poyser, with her keenness and abundant opportunity for observation, should have formed a tolerably fair estimate of what might be expected from Hetty in the way of feeling, and in moments of indignation she had sometimes spoken with great openness on the subject to her husband.

"She's no better than a peacock, as 'ud strut about on the wall and spread its tail when the sun shone if all the folks i' the parish was dying ; there's nothing seems to give her a turn i' th' inside, not even when we thought Totty had tumbled into the pit. To think o' that dear cherub ! And we found her wi' her little shoes stuck i' the mud an' crying fit to break her heart by the far horse-pit. Hetty niver minded it, I could see, though she's been at the nussin' o' the child iver

since it was a babby. It's my belief her heart's as hard as a pibble."

"Nay, nay," said Mr. Poyser, "thee mustn't judge Hetty too hard. Them young gells are like th' unripe grain—they'll make good meal by and by, but they're squashy as yit. Thee't see, Hetty'll be all right when she's got a good husband an' children of her own."

"I don't want to be hard upo' the gell. She's got cliver fingers of her own, and can be useful enough when she likes, and I should miss her wi' the butter, for she's got a cool hand. An' let be what may, I'd strive to do my part by a niece o' yours, an' that I've done; for I've taught her everything as belongs to a house, an' I've told her her duty often enough, though, God knows, I've no breath to spare, an' that catchin' pain comes on dreadful by times. Wi' them three gells in the house, I'd need have twice the strength to keep 'em up to their work. It's like having roast meat at three fires; as soon as you've basted one, another's burnin'."

Hetty stood sufficiently in awe of her aunt to be anxious to conceal from her so much of her vanity as could be hidden without too great a sacrifice. She could not resist spending her money in bits of finery which Mrs. Poyser disapproved; but she would have been ready to die with shame, vexation, and fright, if her aunt had this moment opened the door, and seen her with her bits of candle lighted, and strutting about decked in her scarf and earrings. To prevent such a surprise, she always bolted her door, and she had not forgotten to do so to-night. It was well; for there now came a light tap, and Hetty, with a leaping heart, rushed to blow out the candles and throw them into the drawer. She dare not stay to take out her earrings, but she threw off her scarf and let it fall on the floor before the light tap came again. We shall know how it was that the light tap came if we leave Hetty for a short time and return to Dinah at the moment when she had delivered Totty to her mother's arms, and was come up stairs to her bed-room, adjoining Hetty's.

Dinah delighted in her bed-room window. Being on the second story of that tall house, it gave her a wide view over the fields. The thickness of the wall formed a broad step about a yard below the window, where she could place her chair. And now the first thing she did on entering her room was to seat herself in this chair, and look out on the peaceful fields, beyond which the large moon was rising just above the hedgerow elms. She liked the pasture best, where the milch

cows were lying, and next to that the meadow where the grass was half mown, and lay in silvered sweeping lines. Her heart was very full, for there was to be only one more night on which she would look out on those fields for a long time to come ; but she thought little of leaving the mere scene, for to her bleak Snowfield had just as many charms ; she thought of all the dear people whom she had learned to care for among these peaceful fields, and who would now have a place in her loving remembrance forever. She thought of the struggles and the weariness that might lie before them in the rest of their life's journey, when she should be away from them and know nothing of what was befalling them ; and the pressure of this thought soon became too strong for her to enjoy the unresponding stillness of the moonlit fields. She closed her eyes, that she might feel more intensely the presence of a love and sympathy deeper and more tender than was breathed from the earth and sky. That was often Dinah's mode of praying in solitude. Simply to close her eyes and to feel herself inclosed by the Divine Presence ; then gradually her fears, her yearning anxieties for others, melted away like ice-crystals in a warm ocean. She had sat in this way perfectly still, with her hands crossed on her lap, and the pale light resting on her calm face, for at least ten minutes, when she was startled by a loud sound, apparently of something falling in Hetty's room ; but, like all sounds that fall on our ears in a state of abstraction, it had no distinct character, but was simply loud and startling, so that she felt uncertain whether she had interpreted it rightly. She rose and listened, but all was quiet afterward, and she reflected that Hetty might merely have knocked something down in getting into bed. She began slowly to undress ; but now, owing to the suggestions of this sound, her thoughts became concentrated on Hetty : that sweet young thing, with life and all its trials before her—the solemn daily duties of the wife and mother—and her mind so unprepared for them all ; bent merely on little, foolish, selfish pleasures, like a child hugging its toys in the beginning of a long, toilsome journey, in which it will have to bear hunger, and cold, and unsheltered darkness. Dinah felt a double care for Hetty, because she shared Seth's anxious interest in his brother's lot, and she had not come to the conclusion that Hetty did not love Adam well enough to marry him. She saw too clearly the absence of any warm, self-devoting love in Hetty's nature to regard the coldness of her behavior toward Adam as any

indication that he was not the man she would like to have for a husband. And this blank in Hetty's nature, instead of exciting Dinah's dislike, only touched her with a deeper pity; the lovely face and form affected her as beauty always affects a pure and tender mind free from selfish jealousies: it was an excellent divine gift, that gave a deeper pathos to the need, the sin, the sorrow with which it was mingled, as the canker in a lily-white bud is more grievous to behold than in a common pot-herb.

By the time Dinah had undressed and put on her night-gown, this feeling about Hetty had gathered a painful intensity; her imagination had created a thorny thicket of sin and sorrow, in which she saw the poor thing struggling, torn and bleeding, looking with tears for rescue and finding none. It was in this way that Dinah's imagination and sympathy acted and reacted habitually, each heightening the other. She felt a deep longing to go now and pour into Hetty's ear all the words of tender warning and appeal that rushed into her mind. But perhaps Hetty was already asleep. Dinah put her ear to the partition, and heard still some slight noises which convinced her that Hetty was not yet in bed. Still she hesitated; she was not quite certain of a divine direction; the voice that told her to go to Hetty seemed no stronger than the other voice which said that Hetty was weary, and that going to her now in an unseasonable moment would only tend to close her heart more obstinately. Dinah was not satisfied without a more unmistakable guidance than those inward voices. There was light enough, if she opened her Bible, for her to discern the text sufficiently to know what it would say to her. She knew the physiognomy of every page, and could tell on what book she opened, sometimes on what chapter, without seeing title or number. It was a small thick Bible, worn quite round at the edges. Dinah laid it sideways on the window ledge, where the light was strongest, and then opened it with her forefinger. The first words she looked at were those at the top of the left hand page: "And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him." That was enough for Dinah; she had opened on that memorable parting at Ephesus, when Paul had felt bound to open his heart in a last exhortation and warning. She hesitated no longer, but opening her own door gently, went and tapped at Hetty's. We know she had to tap twice, because Hetty had to put out her candles and throw off her black lace scarf; but after the second tap the door was opened immediately.

Dinah said, "Will you let me come in, Hetty?" and Hetty, without speaking, for she was confused and vexed, opened the door wider and let her in.

What a strange contrast the two figures made! Visible enough in that mingled twilight and moonlight. Hetty, her cheeks flushed and her eyes glistening from her imaginary drama, her beautiful neck and arms bare, her hair hanging in a curly tangle down her back, and the baubles in her ears. Dinah, covered with her long white dress, her pale face full of subdued emotion, almost like a lovely corpse into which the soul has returned charged with sublimer secrets and a sublimer love. They were nearly of the same height; Dinah evidently a little the taller as she put her arm round Hetty's waist, and kissed her forehead.

"I knew you were not in bed, my dear," she said, in her sweet clear voice, which was irritating to Hetty, mingling with her own peevish vexation like music with jangling chains, "for I heard you moving; and I longed to speak to you again to-night, for it is the last but one that I shall be here, and we don't know what may happen to-morrow to keep us apart. Shall I sit down with you while you do up your hair?"

"Oh yes," said Hetty, hastily turning round and reaching the second chair in the room, glad that Dinah looked as if she did not notice her earrings.

Dinah sat down, and Hetty began to brush together her hair before twisting it up, doing it with that air of excessive indifference which belongs to confused self-consciousness. But the expression of Dinah's eyes gradually relieved her; they seemed unobservant of all details.

"Dear Hetty," she said, "it has been borne in upon my mind to-night that you may some day be in trouble—trouble is appointed for us all here below, and there comes a time when we need more comfort and help than the things of this life can give. I want to tell you that if ever you are in trouble and need a friend that will always feel for you and love you, you have got that friend in Dinah Morris at Snowfield; and if you come to her, or send for her, she'll never forget this night and the words she is speaking to you now. Will you remember it, Hetty?"

"Yes," said Hetty, rather frightened. "But why should you think I shall be in trouble? Do you know of anything?"

Hetty had seated herself as she tied on her cap, and now Dinah leaned forward and took her hands and answered—

“Because, dear, trouble comes to us all in this life ; we set our hearts on things which it isn't God's will for us to have, and then we go sorrowing ; the people we love are taken from us, and we can joy in nothing because they are not with us ; sickness comes, and we faint under the burden of our feeble bodies ; we go astray and do wrong, and bring ourselves into trouble with our fellow-men. There is no man or woman born into this world to whom some of these trials do not fall, and so I fall, and so I feel that some of them must happen to you ; and I desire for you, that while you are young you should seek for strength from your Heavenly Father, that you may have a support which will not fail you in the evil day.”

Dinah paused and released Hetty's hands, that she might not hinder her. Hetty sat quite still ; she felt no response within herself to Dinah's anxious affection ; but Dinah's words, uttered with solemn, pathetic distinctness, affected her with a chill fear. Her flush had died away almost to paleness ; she had the timidity of a luxurious pleasure-seeking nature, which shrinks from the hint of pain. Dinah saw the effect, and her tender, anxious pleading became the most earnest, till Hetty, full of a vague fear that something evil was sometime to befall her, began to cry.

It is our habit to say that while the lower nature can never understand the higher, the higher nature commands a complete view of the lower. But I think the higher nature has to learn this comprehension, as we learn the art of vision, by a good deal of hard experience, often with bruises and gashes incurred in taking things up by the wrong end, and fancying our space wider than it is. Dinah had never seen Hetty affected in this way before, and, with her usual benignant hopefulness, she trusted it was the stirring of a divine impulse. She kissed the sobbing thing, and began to cry with her for grateful joy. But Hetty was simply in that excitable state of mind in which there is no calculating what turn the feelings may take from one moment to another, and for the first time she became irritated under Dinah's caress. She pushed her away impatiently, and said with a childish sobbing voice,

“Don't talk to me so, Dinah. Why do you come to frighten me ? I've never done anything to you. Why can't you let me be ? ”

Poor Dinah felt a pang. She was too wise to persist, and only said mildly, “ Yes, my dear, you're tired ; I won't hinder

you any longer. Make haste and get into bed. Good night."

She went out of the room almost as quietly and quickly as if she had been a ghost ; but once by the side of her own bed, she threw herself on her knees, and poured out in deep silence all the passionate pity that filled her heart.

As for Hetty, she was soon in the wood again—her waking dreams being merged in a sleeping life scarcely more fragmentary and confused.

CHAPTER XVI.

LINKS.

ARTHUR DONNITHORNE, you remember, is under an engagement with himself to go and see Mr. Irwine this Friday morning, and he is awake and dressing so early, that he determines to go before breakfast, instead of after. The rector, he knows, breakfasts alone at half-past nine, the ladies of the family having a different breakfast hour ; Arthur will have an early ride over the hill and breakfast with him. One can say everything best over a meal.

The progress of civilization has made a breakfast or a dinner an easy and cheerful substitute for more troublesome and disagreeable ceremonies. We take a less gloomy view of our errors now our father confessor listens to us over his egg and coffee. We are more distinctly conscious that rude penances are out of the question for gentlemen in an enlightened age, and that mortal sin is not incompatible with an appetite for muffins ; an assault on our pockets, which in more barbarous times would have been made in the brusque form of a pistol-shot, is quite a well-bred and smiling procedure now it has become a request for a loan thrown in as an easy parenthesis between the second and third glasses of claret.

Still, there was this advantage in the old rigid forms, that they committed you to the fulfilment of a resolution by some outward deed. When you have put your mouth to one end of a hole in a stone wall, and are aware that there is an expectant ear on the other end, you are more likely to say what you

came out with the intention of saying, than if you were seated with your legs in an easy attitude under the mahogany, with a companion who will have no reason to be surprised if you have nothing particular to say.

However, Arthur Donnithorne, as he winds among the pleasant lanes on horseback in the morning sunshine, has a sincere determination to open his heart to the rector, and the swirling sound of the scythe as he passes by the meadow is all the pleasanter to him because of this honest purpose. He is glad to see the promise of settled weather now for getting in the hay, about which the farmers have been fearful ; and there is something so healthful in the sharing of a joy that is general and not merely personal, that this thought about the hay-harvest reacts on his state of mind, and makes his resolution seem an easier matter. A man about town might perhaps consider that these influences were not to be felt out of a child's story-book ; but when you are among the fields and hedgerows, it is impossible to maintain a consistent superiority to simple, natural pleasures.

Arthur had passed the village of Hayslope, and was approaching the Broxton side of the hill, when, at a turning in the road, he saw a figure about a hundred yards before him which it was impossible to mistake for any one else than Adam Bede, even if there had been no gray, tailless shepherd dog at his heels. He was striding along at his usual rapid pace, and Arthur pushed on his horse to overtake him ; for he retained too much of his boyish feeling for Adam to miss an opportunity of chatting with him. I will not say that his love for that good fellow did not owe some of its force to the love of patronage ; our friend Arthur liked to do everything that was handsome, and to have his handsome deeds recognized.

Adam looked round as he heard the quickening clatter of the horse's heels, and waited for the horseman, lifting his paper cap from his head with a bright smile of recognition. Next to his own brother, Seth, Adam would have done more for Arthur Donnithorne than for any other young man in the world. There was hardly anything he would not rather have lost than the two-foot ruler which he always carried in his pocket ; it was Arthur's present, bought with his pocket-money when he was a fair-haired lad of eleven, and when he had profited so well by Adam's lessons in carpentering and turning, as to embarrass every female in the house with gifts of superfluous thread-reels and round boxes. Adam had quite a

pride in the little squire in those early days, and the feeling had only become slightly modified as the fair-haired lad had grown into the whiskered young man. Adam, I confess, was very susceptible to the influence of rank, and quite ready to give an extra amount of respect to every one who had more advantages than himself, not being a philosopher, or a proletaire with democratic ideas, but simply a stout-limbed, clever carpenter with a large fund of reverence in his nature, which inclined him to admit all established claims unless he saw very clear grounds for questioning them. He had no theories about setting the world to-rights, but he saw there was a great deal of damage done by building with ill-seasoned timber—by ignorant men in fine clothes making plans for out-houses and workshops, and the like, without knowing the bearings of things—by slovenly joiners' work, and by hasty contracts that could never be fulfilled without ruining somebody ; and he resolved, for his part, to set his face against such doings. On these points he would have maintained his opinion against the largest landed proprietor in Loamshire or Stonyshire either ; but he felt that beyond these it would be better for him to defer to people who were more knowing than himself. He saw as plainly as possible how ill the woods on the estate were managed, and the shameful state of the farm-buildings ; and, if old Squire Donnithorne had asked him the effect of this mismanagement, he would have spoken his opinion without flinching, but the impulse to a respectful demeanor toward a "gentleman" would have been strong within him all the while. The word "gentleman" had a spell for Adam, and, as he often said, he "couldn't abide a fellow who thought he made himself fine by being coxy to's betters." I must remind you again that Adam had the blood of the peasant in his veins, and that, since he was in his prime half a century ago, you must expect some of his characteristics to be obsolete.

Toward the young squire this instinctive reverence of Adam's was assisted by boyish memories and personal regard ; so you may imagine that he thought far more of Arthur's good qualities, and attached far more value to very slight actions of his, than if they had been the qualities and actions of a common workman like himself. He felt sure it would be a fine day for everybody about Hayslope when the young squire came into the estate—such a generous open-hearted disposition as he had, and an "uncommon" notion about improvements and repairs, considering he was only just coming of

age. Thus there was both respect and affection in the smile with which he raised his paper cap as Arthur Donni-throne rode up.

"Well, Adam, how are you?" said Arthur, holding out his hand. He never shook hands with any of the farmers, and Adam felt the honor keenly. "I could swear to your back a long way off. It's just the same back only broader, as when you used to carry me on it. Do you remember?"

"Ay, sir, I remember. It 'ud be a poor look-out if folks didn't remember what they did and said when they were lads. We should think no more about old friends than we do about new uns, then."

"You're going to Broxton, I suppose?" said Arthur, putting his horse on at a slow pace while Adam walked by his side. "Are you going to the Rectory?"

"No, sir, I'm going to see about Bradwell's barn. They're afraid of the roof pushing the walls out; and I'm going to see what can be done with it, before we send the stuff and the workmen."

"Why, Burge trusts almost everything to you now, Adam, doesn't he? I should think he will make you his partner soon. He will if he's wise."

"Nay, sir, I don't see as he'd be much the better off for that. A foreman, if he's got a conscience, and delights in his work, will do his business as well as if he was a partner. I wouldn't give a penny for a man as 'ud drive a nail in slack because he didn't get extra pay for it."

"I know that, Adam; I know you work for him as well as if you were working for yourself. But you would have more power than you have now, and could turn the business to better account, perhaps. The old man must give up his business some time, and he has no son; I suppose he'll want a son-in-law who can take to it. But he has rather grasping fingers of his own, I fancy; I dare say he wants a man who can put some money into the business. If I wer n t as poor as a rat, I would gladly invest some money in that way, for the sake of having you settled on the estate. I'm sure I should profit by it in the end. And perhaps I shall be better off in a year or two. I shall have a larger allowance now I'm of age; and when I've paid off a debt or two I shall be able to look about me."

"You're very good to say so, sir, and I'm not unthankful. But," Adam continued in a decided tone, "I shouldn't like to make any offers to Mr. Burge, or t' have any made for me,

I see no clear road to a partnership. If he should ever want to dispose o' the business, that 'ud be a different matter. I should be glad of some money at a fair interest then, for I feel sure I could pay it off in time."

"Very well, Adam," said Arthur, remembering what Mr. Irwine had said about a probable hitch in the love-making between Adam and Mary Burge, "we'll say no more about it at present. When is your father to be buried?"

"On Sunday, sir; Mr. Irwine's coming earlier on purpose. I shall be glad when it's over, for I think my mother 'ull perhaps get easier then. It cuts one sadly to see the grief of old people; they've no way of working it off; and the new spring brings no new shoots out on the withered tree."

"Ah! you've had a good deal of trouble and vexation in your life, Adam. I don't think you've ever been hairbrained and light-hearted, like other youngsters. You've always had some care on your mind?"

"Why, yes, sir; but that's nothing to make a fuss about. If we're men and have men's feelings, I reckon we must have men's troubles. We can't be like the birds as fly from their nests as soon as they've got their wings, and never know their kin when they see 'em, and get a fresh lot every year. I've had enough to be thankful for; I've allays had health and strength and brains to give me a delight in my work; and I count it a great thing as I've had Bartle Massey's night-school to go to. He's helped me too knowledge I could never ha' got by myself."

"What a rare fellow you are, Adam!" said Arthur, after a pause, in which he had looked musingly at the big fellow walking by his side. "I could hit out better than most men at Oxford, and yet I believe you would knock me into next week if I were to have a battle with you."

"God forbid I should ever do that, sir," said Adam, looking round at Arthur, and smiling. "I used to fight for fun; but I've never done that since I was the cause o' poor Gil Tranter being laid up for a fortnight. I'll never fight any man again only when he behaves like a scoundrel. If you get hold of a chap that's got no shame nor conscience to stop him, you must try what you can do by bunging his eyes up."

Arthur did not laugh, for he was preoccupied with some thought that made him say presently,

"I should think now, Adam, you never have any struggles within yourself. I fancy you would master a wish that you had made up your mind it was not quite right to indulge,

as easily as you would knock a drunken fellow down who was quarrelsome with you. I mean, you are never shilly-shally, first making up your mind that you won't do a thing, and then doing it after all."

"Well," said Adam slowly, after a moment's hesitation, "no. I don't remember ever being see-saw in that way, when I'd made my mind up, as you say, that a thing was wrong. It takes the taste out o' my mouth for things, when I know I should have a heavy conscience after 'em. I've seen pretty clear, ever since I could cast up a sum, as you can never do what's wrong without breeding sin and trouble more than you can ever see. It's like a bit o' bad workmanship—you never see the end o' the mischief it'll do. And it's a poor look out to come into the world to make your fellow-creatures worse off instead o' better. But there's a difference between the things folks call wrong. I'm not for making a sin of every little fool's trick, or bit o' nonsense anybody may be let into, like some o' them dissenters. And a man may have two minds whether it isn't worth while to get a bruise or two for the sake of a bit o' fun. But it isn't my way to be see-saw about anything; I think my fault lies th' other way. When I've said a thing, if it's only to myself, it's hard for me to go back."

"Yes, that's just what I expected of you," said Arthur. "You've got an iron will, as well as an iron arm. But, however strong a man's resolution may be, it costs him something to carry it out, now and then. We may determine not to gather any cherries, and keep our hands sturdily in our pockets, but we can't prevent our mouths from watering."

"That's true, sir; but there's nothing like settling with ourselves, as there's a deal we must do without i' this life. It's no use looking on life as if it was Treddles'on fair, where folks only go to see shows and get fairings. If we do, we shall find it different. But where's the use o' me talking to you, sir? You know better than I do."

"I'm not sure of that, Adam. You've had four or five years' experience more than I've had, and I think your life has been a better school to you than college has been to me."

"Why, sir, you seem to think o' college something like what Bartle Massey does. He says college mostly makes people like bladders—just good for nothing but t' hold the stuff as is poured into 'em. But he's got a tongue like a sharp blade, Bartle has; it never touches anything but it cuts. Here's the turning, sir. I must bid you good-morning, as you're going to the Rectory."

"Good-by, Adam, good-by."

Arthur gave his horse to the groom at the Rectory gate, and walked along the gravel toward the door which opened on the garden. He knew that the rector always breakfasted in his study, and the study lay on the left hand of this door, opposite the dining-room. It was a small, low room belonging to the old part of the house—dark with the sombre covers of the books that lined the walls; yet it looked very cheery this morning as Arthur reached the open window. For the morning sun fell aslant on the great glass globe with the gold-fish in it, which stood on a scagliola pillar in front of the ready-spread bachelor breakfast-table, and by the side of this breakfast-table was a group which would have made any room enticing. In the crimson demask easy-chair sat Mr. Irwine, with that radiant freshness which he always had when he came from his morning toilette; his finely-formed, plump white hand was playing along Juno's brown curly back; and close to Juno's tail, which was wagging with calm matronly pleasure, the two brown pups were rolling over each other in an ecstatic duet of worrying noises. On a cushion a little removed sat Pug, with the air of a maiden lady who looked on these familiarities as animal weaknesses, which she made as little show as possible of observing. On the table, at Mr. Irwine's elbow, lay the first volume of the Foulis *Æschylus*, which Arthur knew well by sight; and the silver coffee-pot, which Carrol was bringing in, sent forth a fragrant steam, which completed the delights of a bachelor breakfast.

"Halloo, Arthur, that's a good fellow! You're just in time," said Mr. Irwine, as Arthur paused and stepped in over the low window-sill. "Carrol, we shall want more coffee and eggs, and haven't you got some cold fowl for us to eat with that ham? Why, this is like old days, Arthur; you haven't been to breakfast with me these five years."

"It was a tempting morning for a ride before breakfast," said Arthur, "and I used to like breakfasting with you so when I was reading with you. My grandfather is always a few degrees colder at breakfast than at any other hour in the day. I think his morning bath doesn't agree with him."

Arthur was anxious not to imply that he came with any special purpose. He had no sooner found himself in Mr. Irwine's presence than the confidence which he had thought quite easy before suddenly appeared the most difficult thing in the world to him, and at the very moment of shaking hands he saw his purpose in quite a new light. How could he make

Irwine understand his position unless he told him those little scenes in the wood, and how could he tell them without looking like a fool? And then his weakness in coming back from Gawaine's, and doing the very opposite of what he intended? Irwine would think him a shilly-shally fellow ever after. However, it must come out in an unpremeditated way; the conversation might lead up to it.

"I like breakfast-time better than any other moment in the day," said Mr. Irwine. "No dust has settled on one's mind then, and it presents a clear mirror to the rays of things. I always have a favorite book by me at breakfast, and I enjoy the bits I pick up then so much that, regularly every morning, it seems to me as if I should certainly become studious again. But presently Dent brings up a poor fellow who has killed a hare, and when I've got through my 'justicing,' as Carrol calls it, I'm inclined for a ride round the glebe, and on my way back I meet with the master of the work-house, who has got a long story of a mutinous pauper to tell me; and so the day goes on, and I'm always the same lazy fellow before evening sets in. Besides, one wants the stimulus of sympathy, and I have never had that since poor D'Oyley left Treddleston. If you had stuck to your books well, you rascal, I should have had a pleasanter prospect before me. But scholarship doesn't run in your family blood."

"No, indeed. It's well if I can remember a little inapplicable Latin to adorn my maiden speech in Parliament six or seven years hence. '*Cras ingens iterabimus æquor*,' and a few shreds of that sort will perhaps stick to me, and I shall arrange my opinions so as to introduce them. But I don't think a knowledge of the classics is a pressing want to a country gentleman; as far as I can see, he'd much better have a knowledge of manures. I've been reading your friend Arthur Young's books lately, and there's nothing I should like better than to carry out some of his ideas in putting the farmers on a better management of their land, and, as he says, making what was a wild country, all of the same dark hue, bright and variegated with corn and cattle. My grandfather will never let me have any power while he lives; but there's nothing I should like better than to undertake the Stonyshire side of the estate—it's in a dismal condition—and set improvements on foot, and gallop about from one place to another and overlook them. I should like to know all the laborers, and see them touching their hats to me with a look of good-will."

"Bravo, Arthur ; a man who has feeling for the classics couldn't make a better apology for coming into the world than by increasing the quantity of food to maintain scholars, and rectors who appreciate scholars. And, whenever you enter on your career of model landlord, may I be there to see. You'll want a portly rector to complete the picture, and take his tithe of all the respect and honor you get by your hard work. Only don't set your heart too strongly on the good-will you are to get in consequence. I'm not sure that men are the fondest of those who try to be useful to them. You know Gawaine has got the curses of the whole neighborhood upon him about that inclosure. You must make it quite clear to your mind which you are most bent upon, old boy—popularity or usefulness—else you may happen to miss both."

"Oh, Gawaine is harsh in his manners ; he doesn't make himself personally agreeable to his tenants. I don't believe there's anything you can't prevail on people to do with kindness. For my part, I couldn't live in the neighborhood where I was not respected and beloved ; it's very pleasant to go among the tenants here, they all seem so well inclined to me. I suppose it seems only the other day to them since I was a little lad, riding on a pony about as big as a sheep. And if fair allowance were made to them, and their buildings attended to, one could persuade them to farm on a better plan, stupid as they are."

"Then mind you fall in love in the right place, and **don't** get a wife who will drain your purse and make you niggardly in spite of yourself. My mother and I have a little discussion about you sometimes : she says, 'I'll never risk a single prophecy on Arthur until I see the woman he falls in love with.' She thinks your lady-love will rule you as the moon rules the tides. But I feel bound to stand up for you, as my pupil, you know ; and I maintain that you're not of that watery quality. So mind you don't disgrace my judgment."

Arthur winced under this speech, for keen old Mrs. Irwine's opinion about him had the disagreeable effect of a sinister omen. This, to be sure, was only another reason for persevering in his intention, and getting an additional security against himself. Nevertheless, at this point in the conversation, he was conscious of increased disinclination to tell his story about Hetty. He was of an impressible nature, and lived a great deal in other people's opinions and feelings concerning himself ; and the mere fact that he was in the presence of an intimate friend, who had not the slightest

notion that he had had any such serious internal struggle as he came to confide, rather shook his own belief in the seriousness of the struggle. It was not, after all, a thing to make a fuss about, and what could Irwine do for him that he could not do for himself? He would go to Eagledale in spite of Meg's lameness—go on Rattler, and Pym follow as well as he could on the old hack. That was his thought as he sugared his coffee; but the next minute, as he was lifting the cup to his lips, he remembered how thoroughly he had made up his mind last night to tell Irwine. No! he would not be vacillating again—he *would* do what he had meant to do this time. So it would be well not to let the personal tone of the conversation altogether drop. If they went to quite indifferent topics, his difficulty would be heightened. It had required no noticeable pause for this rush and rebound of feeling, before he answered,

“But I think it is hardly an argument against a man's general strength of character, that he should be apt to be mastered by love. A fine constitution doesn't insure one against small-pox or any other of those inevitable diseases. A man may be very firm in other matters, and yet be under a sort of witchery from a woman.”

“Yes; but there's this difference between love and small-pox, or bewitchment either—that if you detect the disease at an early stage and try change of air there is every chance of complete escape, without any farther development of symptoms. And there are certain alterative doses which a man may administer to himself by keeping unpleasant consequences before his mind; that gives you a sort of smoked glass through which you may look at the resplendent fair one and discern her true outline; though I'm afraid, by the bye, the smoked glass is apt to be missing just at the moment it is most wanted. I dare say, now, even a man fortified with a knowledge of the classics might be lured into an imprudent marriage, in spite of the warning given him by the chorus in the Prometheus.”

The smile that flitted across Arthur's face was a faint one, and instead of following Mr. Irwine's playful lead he said quite seriously, “Yes, that's the worst of it. It's a desperately vexatious thing that, after all one's reflections and quiet determinations, we should be ruled by moods that one can't calculate on beforehand. I don't think a man ought to be blamed so much if he is betrayed into doing things in that way, in spite of his resolutions.”

"Ah! but the moods lie in his nature, my boy, just as must as his reflections did, and more. A man can never do anything at variance with his own nature. He carries within him the germ of his most exceptional action; and if we wise people make eminent fools of ourselves on any particular occasion, we must endure the legitimate conclusion that we carry a few grains of folly to our ounce of wisdom."

"Well, but one may be betrayed into doing things by a combination of circumstances, which one might never have done otherwise."

"Why, yes, a man can't very well steal a bank-note unless the bank-note lies within convenient reach; but he won't make us think him an honest man because he begins to howl at the bank-note for falling in his way."

"But surely you don't think a man who struggles against a temptation into which he falls at last as bad as the man who never struggles at all?"

"No, my boy, I pity him, in proportion to his struggles, for they foreshadow the inward suffering which is the worst form of Nemesis. Consequences are unpitying. Our deeds carry their terrible consequences, quite apart from any fluctuations that went before—consequences that are hardly ever confined to ourselves. And it is best to fix our minds on that certainty, instead of considering what may be the elements of excuse for us. But I never knew you so inclined for moral discussion, Arthur. Is it some danger of your own that you are considering in this philosophical, general way?"

In asking this question Mr. Irwine pushed his plate away, threw himself back in his chair, and looked straight at Arthur. He really suspected that Arthur wanted to tell him something and thought of smoothing the way for him by this direct question. But he was mistaken. Brought suddenly and involuntarily to the brink of confession, Arthur shrank back, and felt less disposed toward it than ever. The conversation had taken a more serious tone than he had intended—it would quite mislead Irwine—he would imagine there was a deep passion for Hetty, while there was no such thing. He was conscious of coloring, and was annoyed at his boyishness.

"Oh no, no danger," he said, as indifferently as he could. "I don't know that I am more liable to irresolution than other people; only there are little incidents now and then that set one speculating on what might happen in the future."

Was there a motive at work under this strange reluctance of Arthur's which had a sort of backstairs influence not admitted to himself? Our mental business is carried on much

in the same way as the business of the state : a great deal of hard work is done by agents who are not acknowledged. In a piece of machinery, too, I believe there is often a small, unnoticeable wheel which has a great deal to do with the motion of the large, obvious ones. Possibly there was some such unrecognized agent secretly busy in Arthur's mind at this moment—possibly it was the fear lest he might hereafter find the fact of having made a confession to the rector a serious annoyance, in case he should *not* be able quite to carry out his good resolutions ! I dare not assert that it was not so. The human soul is a very complex thing.

The idea of Hetty had just crossed Mr. Irwine's mind as he looked inquiringly at Arthur, but his disclaiming, indifferent answer confirmed the thought which had quickly followed—that there could be nothing serious in that direction. There was no probability that Arthur ever saw her except at church, and at her own home under the eye of Mrs. Poyser ; and the hint he had given Arthur about her the other day had no more serious meaning than to prevent him from noticing her so as to rouse the little chit's vanity, and in this way to perturb the rustic drama of her life. Arthur would soon join his regiment, and be far away ; no, there could be no danger in that quarter, even if Arthur's character had not been a strong security against it. His honest, patronizing pride in the good-will and respect of everybody about him was a safeguard even against foolish romance, still more against a lower kind of folly. If there had been anything special on Arthur's mind in the previous conversation, it was clear he was not inclined to enter into details, and Mr. Irwine was too delicate to imply even a friendly curiosity. He perceived a change of subject would be welcome and said,

“ By the way, Arthur, at your colonel's birthday fête there were some transparencies that made a great effect, in honor of Britannia, and Pitt, and the Loamshire Militia, and, above all, the ‘generous youth,’ the hero of the day. Don't you think you should get up something of the same sort to astonish our weak minds ? ”

The opportunity was gone. While Arthur was hesitating, the rope to which he might have clung had drifted away—he must trust now to his own swimming.

In ten minutes from that time Mr. Irwine was called for on business, and Arthur, bidding him good-by, mounted his horse again with a sense of dissatisfaction, which he tried to quell by determining to set off for Eagledale without an hour's delay.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH THE STORY PAUSES A LITTLE.

THIS rector of Broxton, is little better than a pagan ! ” I hear one of my lady readers exclaim. “ How much more edifying it would have been if you had made him give Arthur some truly spiritual advice. You might have put into his mouth the most beautiful things—quite as good as reading a sermon.”

Certainly I could, my fair critic, if I were a clever novelist, not obliged to creep servilely after nature and fact, but able to represent things as they never have been and never will be. Then, of course, my characters will be entirely of my own choosing, and I could select the most unexceptionable type of clergyman, and put my own admirable opinions into his mouth on all occasions. But you must have perceived long ago that I have no such lofty vocation, and that I aspire to give no more than a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. The mirror is doubtless defective ; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed ; the reflection faint or confused ; but I feel as much bound to tell you, as precisely as I can, what that reflection is, as if I were in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath.

Sixty years ago—it is a long time, so no wonder things have changed—all clergymen were not zealous ; indeed there is reason to believe that the number of zealous clergymen was small, and it is probable that if one among the small minority had owned the livings of Broxton and Hayslope in the year 1799, you would have liked him no better than you like Mr. Irwine. Ten to one, you would have thought him a tasteless, indiscreet, methodistical man. It is so very rarely that facts hit that nice medium required by our own enlightened opinions and refined taste ! Perhaps you will say, “ Do improve the facts a little, then : make them more accordant with those correct views which it is our privilege to possess. The world is not just what we like ; do touch it up with a tasteful pencil, and make believe it is not quite such a mixed, entangled affair. Let all people who hold unexceptionable opinions act unexceptionably. Let your most faulty characters always be on the wrong side, and your virtuous one on the right. Then we shall see at a glance whom we are to condemn, and whom

we are to approve. Then we shall be able to admire, without the slightest disturbance of our prepossessions ; we shall hate and despise with that true ruminant relish which belongs to undoubting confidence."

But, my good friend, what will you do then with your fellow-parishioner who opposes your husband in the vestry?—with your newly appointed vicar, whose style of preaching you find painfully below that of his regretted predecessor?—with the honest servant who worries your soul with her one failing?—with your neighbor, Mrs. Green, who was really kind to you in your last illness, but has said several ill-natured things about you since your convalescence?—nay, with your excellent husband itself, who has other irritating habits besides that of not wiping his shoes? These fellow-mortals, every one, must be accepted as they are, you can neither straighten their noses, nor straighten their vit, not rectify their dispositions ; and it is these people—among whom your life is passed—that it is needful you should tolerate, pity, and love ; it is these more or less ugly, stupid, inconsistent people, whose movements of goodness you should be able to admire—for whom you should cherish all possible hopes, all possible patience. And I would not, even if I had the choice, be the clever novelist who could create a world so much better than this, in which we get up in the morning to do our daily work, that you would be likely to turn a harder, colder eye on the dusty streets and the common green fields—on the real breathing men and women, who can be chilled by your indifference or injured by your prejudice ; who can be cheered and helped onward by your fellow-feeling, your forbearance, your outspoken, brave justice.

So I am content to tell my simple story, without trying to make things seem better than they were ; dreading nothing, indeed, but falsity, which, in spite of one's best efforts, there is reason to dread. Falsehood is so easy, truth so difficult. The pencil is conscious of a delightful facility in drawing a griffin—the longer the claws, and the larger the wings, the better ; but that marvellous facility, which we mistook for genius, is apt to forsake us when we want to draw a real exaggerated lion. Examine your words well, and you will find that even when you have no motive to be false, it is a very hard thing to say the exact truth, even about your own immediate feelings—much harder than to say something fine about them which is *not* the exact truth.

It is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness that I

delight in many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise. I find a source of delicious sympathy in these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence, which has been the fate of so many more among my fellow-mortals than a life of pomp or of absolute indigence, of tragic suffering or of world-stirring actions. I turn, without shrinking, from cloud-borne angels, from prophets, sibyls, and heroic warriors, to an old woman bending over her flower-pot, or eating her solitary dinner, while the noonday light, softened, perhaps by a screen of leaves, falls on her mob-cap, and just touches the rim of her spinning-wheel, and her stone jug, and all those cheap, common things which are the precious necessities of life to her; or I turn to that village wedding, kept between four walls, where an awkward bridegroom opens the dance with a high-shouldered, broad-faced bride, while elderly and middle-aged friends look on, with very irregular noses and lips, and probably with quart pots in their hands, but with an expression of unmistakable contentment and good-will. "Foh!" says my idealistic friend, "what vulgar details! What good is there in taking all these pains to give an exact likeness of old women and clowns? What a low phase of life! what clumsy, ugly people!"

But, bless us, things may be lovable that are not altogether handsome, I hope? I am not at all sure that the majority of the human race have not been ugly, and even among those "lords of their kind," the British, squat figures, ill-shapen nostrils, and dingy complexions, are not startling exceptions. Yet there is a great deal of family love among us. I have a friend or two whose class of features is such that the Apollo curl on the summit of their brows would be decidedly trying; yet, to my certain knowledge, tender hearts have beaten for them, and their miniatures—flattering, but still not lovely—are kissed in secret by motherly lips. I have seen many an excellent matron, who could never in her best days have been handsome, and yet she had a packet of yellow love-letters in a private drawer, and sweet children showered kisses on her sallow cheeks. And I believe there have been plenty of young heroes, of middle stature and feeble beards, who have felt quite sure they could never love anything more insignificant than a Diana, and yet have found themselves in middle life happily settled with a wife who waddles. Yes! thank God; human feeling is like the mighty rivers that bless the earth; it does not wait for beauty—it flows with resistless force, and brings beauty with it.

All honor and reverence to the divine beauty of form ! Let us cultivate it to the utmost in men, women, and children—in our gardens and in our houses ; but let us love that other beauty, too, which lies in no secret of proportion, but in the secret of deep human sympathy. Paint us an angel, if you can, with a floating violet robe, and a face paled by the celestial light ; paint us yet oftener a Madonna, turning her mild face upward, and opening her arms to welcome the divine glory ; but do not impose on us any æsthetic rules which shall banish from the region of Art those old women scraping carrots with their work-worn hands, those heavy clowns taking holiday in a dingy pot-house—those rounded backs and stupid, weather-beaten faces that have bent over the spade and done the rough work of the world—those homes with their tin pans, their brown pitchers, their rough curs, and their clusters of onions. In this world there are so many of these common, coarse people, who have no picturesque sentimental wretchedness ! It is so needful we should remember their existence, else we may happen to leave them quite out of our religion and philosophy, and frame lofty theories which only fit a world of extremes. Therefore let Art always remind us of them ; therefore let us always have men ready to give the loving pains of a life to the faithful representing of commonplace things—men who see beauty in these commonplace things, and delight in showing how kindly the light of heaven falls on them. There are few prophets in the world—few sublimely beautiful women—few heroes. I can't afford to give all my love and reverence to such rarities ; I want a great deal of those feelings for my every-day fellow-men, especially for the few in the foreground of the great multitude, whose faces I know, whose hands I touch, for whom I have to make way with kindly courtesy. Neither are picturesque lazzaroni or romantic criminals half so frequent as your common laborer, who gets his own bread, and eat its vulgarly but creditably with his own pocket-knife. It is more needful that I should have a fibre of sympathy connecting me with that vulgar citizen who weighs out my sugar in a vilely assorted cravat and waistcoat, than with the handsomest rascal in red scarf and green feathers ; more needful that my heart should swell with loving admiration at some trait of gentle goodness in the faulty people who sit at the same hearth with me, or in the clergyman of my own parish, who is, perhaps, rather too corpulent, and in other respects is not an Oberlin or a Tillotson, than at the deeds of heroes

whom I shall never know except by hearsay, or at the sublimest abstract of all clerical graces that was ever conceived by an able novelist.

And so I come back to Mr. Irwine, with whom I desire you to be in perfect charity, far as he may be from satisfying your demands on the clerical character. Perhaps you think he was not—as he ought to have been—a living demonstration of the benefits attached to the national church? But I am not sure of that; at least I know that the people in Broxton and Hayslope would have been very sorry to part with their clergyman, and that most faces brightened at his approach; and until it can be proved that hatred is a better thing for the soul than love, I must believe that Mr. Irwine's influence in his parish was a more wholesome one than that of the zealous Mr. Ryde, who came there twenty years afterward, when Mr. Irwine had been gathered to his fathers. It is true Mr. Ryde insisted strongly on the doctrines of the Reformation, visited his flock a great deal in their own homes, and was severe in rebuking the aberrations of the flesh—put a stop, indeed, to the Christmas rounds of the church singers, as promoting drunkenness and too light a handling of sacred things. But I gathered from Adam Bede, to whom I talked of these matters in his old age, that few clergymen could be less successful in winning the hearts of their parishioners than Mr. Ryde. They gathered a great many notions about doctrine from him, so that almost every church-goer under fifty began to distinguish as well between the genuine gospel and what did not come precisely up to that standard, as if he had been born and bred a Dissenter; and for some time after his arrival there seemed to be quite a religious movement in that quiet rural district. "But," said Adam, "I've seen pretty clear, ever since I was a young un, as religion's something else besides notions. It isn't notions sets people doing the right thing—it's feelings. It's the same with the notions in religion as it is with math'matics—a man may be able to work problems straight off in's head, as he sits by the fire and smokes his pipe; but if he has to make a machine or a building, he must have a will and a resolution, and love something else better than his own ease. Somehow, the congregation began to fall off, and people began to speak light o' Mr. Ryde. I believe he meant right at b ttom; but, you see, he was sourish-tempered, and was for beating down prices with his people as worked for him; and his preaching wouldn't go down well with that sauce. And he wanted to be like my lord judge i'

the parish, punishing folks for doing wrong ; and he scolded 'em from the pulpit as if he'd been a Ranter, and yet he couldn't abide the Dissenters, and was a deal more set against 'em than Mr. Irwine was. And then he didn't keep within his income, for he seemed to think, at first go-off, that six hundred a year was to make him as big a man as Mr. Donithorne ; that's a sore mischief I've often seen with the poor curates jumping into a bit of a living all of a sudden. Mr. Ryde was a deal thought on at a distance, I believe, and he wrote books ; but as for math'matics and the natur o' things, he was as ignorant as a woman. He was very knowing about doctrines, and used to call 'em the bulwarks of the Reformation ; but I've always mistrusted that sort o' learning as leaves folks foolish and unreasonable about business. Now Mester Irwine was as different as could be ; as quick !—he understood what you meant in a minute ; and he knew all about building, and could see when you'd made a good job. And he behaved as much like a gentleman to the farmers, and th' old women, and the laborers, as he did to the gentry. You never saw *him* interfering and scolding, and trying to play th' emperor. Ah ! he was a fine man as ever you set eyes on ; and so kind to 's mother and sisters. That poor sickly Miss Anne—he seemed to think more of her than of anybody else in the world. There wasn't a soul in the parish had a word to say against him ; and his servants staid with him till they were so old and pottering he had to hire other folks to do their work."

"Well," I said, "that was an excellent way of preaching in the week-days ; but I dare say, if your old friend Mr. Irwine were to come to life again, and get into the pulpit next Sunday, you would be rather ashamed that he didn't preach better after all your praise of him."

"Nay, nay," said Adam, broadening his chest and throwing himself back in his chair, as if he were ready to meet all inferences, "nobody has ever heard me say Mr. Irwine was much of a preacher. He didn't go into deep, speritial experience ; and I know there's a deal in a man's inward life as you can't measure by the square, and say, 'do this, and that'll follow, and, 'do that, and this'll follow.' There's things go on in the soul, and times when feelings come into you like a rushing mighty wind, as the Scripture says, and part your life in two a'most, so as you look back on yourself as if you was somebody else. Those are things as you can't bottle up in a 'do this,' and 'do that ;' and I'll go so far

with the strongest Methodist ever you'll find. That shows me there's deep, speritual things in religion. You can't make much out wi' talking about it, but you feel it. Mr. Irwine didn't go into those things; he preached short moral sermons, and that was all. But then he acted pretty much up to what he said; he didn't set up for being so different from other folks one day, and then be as like 'em as two peas the next. And he made folks love him and respect him, and that was better nor stirring up their gall wi' being over busy. Mrs. Poyser used to say—you know she would have her word about everything—she said, Mr. Irwine was like a good meal o' victual—you were the better for him without thinking on it; and Mr. Ryde was like a dose o' physic—he griped you and worreted you, and after all he left you much the same."

"But didn't Mr. Ryde preach a great deal more about that spiritual part of religion that you talk of, Adam? Couldn't you get more out of his sermons than out of Mr. Irwine's?"

"Eh! I knowna. He preached a deal about doctrines. But I've seen pretty clear, ever since I was a young un, as religion's something is besides doctrines and notions. I look at it as if the doctrines were like finding names for your feelings, so as you can talk of 'em when you've never known 'em, just as a man may talk o' tools when he knows their names, though he's never so much as seen 'em, still less handled 'em. I've heard a deal o' doctrine i' my time, for I used to go after the dissenting preachers along wi' Seth when I was a lad o' seventeen, and got puzzling myself a deal about the Arminians and the Calvinists. The Wesleyans, you know, are strong Arminians; and Seth, who could never abide anything harsh, and was always for hoping the best, held fast by the Wesleyans from the very first; but I thought I could pick a hole or two in their notions, and I got disputing wi' one o' the class-leaders down at Treddles'on, and harassed him so, first o' this sid and then o' that, till at last he said, 'Young man, it's the devil making use o' your pride and conceit as a weapon to war against the simplicity o' the truth.' I couldn't help laughing then, but as I was going home, I thought the man wasn't far wrong. I began to see as all this weighing and cifting what this text means and that text means, and whether folks are saved all by God's grace, or whether there goes an ounce o' their own will to't, was no part o' real religion at all. You may talk o' these things for hours on end, and you'll only be all the more coxy and conceited

for 't. So I took to going nowhere but to church, and hearing nobody but Mr. Irwine, for he said nothing but what was good, and what you'd be the wiser for remembering. And I found it better for my soul to be humble before the mysteries o' God's dealings, and not be making a clatter about what I could never understand. And they're poor foolish questions after all ; for what have we got either inside or outside of us but what comes from God ? If we've got a resolution to do right, He gave it to us, I reckon, first or last ; but I see plain enough we shall never do it without a resolution, and that's enough for me."

Adam, you perceive, was a warm admirer, perhaps a partial judge, of Mr. Irwine, as, happily, some of us still are of the people we have known familiarly. Doubtless it will be despised as a weakness by that lofty order of minds who pant after the ideal, and are oppressed by a general sense that their emotions are of too exquisite a character to find fit objects among their everyday fellow-men. I have often been favored with the confidence of these select natures, and find them concur in the experience that great men are overestimated and small men are insupportable ; that if you would love a woman without ever looking back on your love as a folly, she must die while you are courting her ; and, if you would maintain the slightest belief in human heroism, you must never make a pilgrimage to see the hero. I confess I have often meanly shrunk from confessing to those accomplished and acute gentlemen what my own experience has been. I am afraid I have often smiled with hypocritical assent, and gratified them with an epigram on the fleeting nature of our illusions, which any one moderately acquainted with French literature can command at a moment's notice. Human converse, I think some wise man has remarked, is not rigidly severe. But I herewith discharge my conscience, and declare, that I have had quite enthusiastic movements of admiration toward old gentlemen who spoke the worst English, who were occasionally fretful in their temper, and who had never moved in a higher sphere of influence than that of parish overseer ; and that the way in which I have come to the conclusion that human nature is lovable—the way I have learnt something of its deep pathos, its sublime mysteries—has been by living a great deal among people more or less commonplace and vulgar, of whom you would, perhaps, hear nothing very surprising if you were to inquire about them in the neighborhoods where they dwelt. Ten to one most of

the small shopkeepers in their vicinity saw nothing at all in them. For I have observed this remarkable coincidence, that the select natures who pant after the ideal, and find nothing in pantaloons or petticoats great enough to command their reverence or love, are curiously in unison with the narrowest and pettiest. For example, I have often heard Mr. Gedge, the landlord of the Royal Oak, who used to turn a bloodshot eye on his neighbors in the village of Shepperton, sum up his opinion of the people in his own parish—and they were all the people he knew—in these emphatic words: “Ay, sir, I’ve said it often, and I’ll say it again, they’re a poor lot i’ this parish—a poor lot, sir, big and little.” I think he had a dim idea that if he could migrate to a distant parish, he might find neighbors worthy of him, and, indeed, he did subsequently transfer himself to the Saracen’s Head, which was doing a thriving business in the back street of a neighboring market-town. But, oddly enough, he has found the people up that back street of precisely the same stamp as the inhabitants of Shepperton—“a poor lot, sir, big and little, and them as comes for a go o’ gin are no better than them as comes for a pint o’ twopenny—a poor lot.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHURCH.

“HETTY, Hetty, don’t you know church begins at two, and it’s gone half after one a’ready. Have you got nothing better to think on this good Sunday, as poor old Thias Bede’s to be put into the ground, and him drowned i’ the dead o’ the night, as it’s enough to make one’s back run cold, but you must be dizening yourself as if there was a wedding i’stead of a funeral?”

“Well, aunt,” said Hetty, “I can’t be ready as soon as everybody else, when I’ve got Totty’s things to put on. And I’d ever such work to make her stand still.”

Hetty was coming down stairs, and Mrs. Poyser, in her plain bonnet and shawl, was standing below. If ever a girl looked as if she had been made of roses, that girl was Hetty in her Sunday hat and frock. For her hat was trimmed with

pink, and her frock had pink spots sprinkled on a white ground. There was nothing but pink and white about her, except in her dark hair and eyes and her little buckled shoes. Mrs. Poyser was provoked at herself, for she could hardly keep from smiling, as any mortal is inclined to do at the sight of pretty round things. So she turned without speaking and joined the group outside the house door, followed by Hetty, whose heart was fluttering so at the thought of some one she expected to see at church, that she hardly felt the ground she trod on.

And now the little procession set off. Mr. Poyser was in his Sunday suit of drab, with a red and green waistcoat, and a green watch-ribbon, having a large carnelian seal attached, pendent like a plumb-line from that promontory where his watch-pocket was situated; a silk handkerchief of a yellow tone round his neck, and excellent gray ribbed stockings, knitted by Mrs. Poyser's own hand, setting off the proportions of his leg. Mr. Poyser had no reason to be ashamed of his leg, and suspected that the growing abuse of top-boots and other fashions tending to disguise the nether limbs, had their origin in a pitiable degeneracy of the human calf. Still less had he reason to be ashamed of his round jolly face, which was good-humor itself as he said, "Come, Hetty—come, little uns!" and, giving his arm to his wife, led the way through the causeway gate into the yard.

The "little uns" addressed were Marty and Tommy, boys of nine and seven, in little fustian tailed coats and knee-breeches, relieved by rosy cheeks and black eyes; looking as much like their father as a very small elephant is like a very large one. Hetty walked between them, and behind came patient Molly, whose task it was to carry Totty through the yard and over all the wet places on the road; for Totty, having speedily recovered from her threatened fever, had insisted on going to church to-day, and especially on wearing her red-and-black necklace outside her tippet. And there were many wet places for her to be carried over his afternoon, for there had been heavy showers in the morning, though now the clouds had rolled off and lay in towering silvery masses on the horizon.

You might have known it was Sunday if you had only waked up in the farm-yard. The cocks and hens seemed to know it, and made only crooning subdued noises; the very bull-dog looked less savage, as if he would have been satisfied with a smaller bite than usual. The sunshine seemed to call

all things to rest and not to labor ; it was asleep itself on the moss-grown cow-shed ; on the group of white ducks nestling together with their bills tucked under their wings ; on the old black sow stretched languidly on the straw, while her largest young one found an excellent spring bed on his mother's fat ribs ; on Alick, the shepherd, in his new smock-frock, taking an uneasy siesta, half-sitting half-standing on the granary steps. Alick was of opinion that church, like other luxuries, was not to be indulged in often by a foreman who had the weather and the ewes on his mind. "Church ! nay—I'n gotten summat else to think on," was an answer which he often uttered in a tone of bitter significance that silenced farther question. I feel sure Alick meant no irreverence ; indeed, I know that his mind was not of a speculative, negative cast, and he would on no account have missed going to church on Christmas-day, Easter Sunday, and "Whissuntide." But he had a general impression that public worship and religious ceremonies, like other non-productive employments, were intended for people who had leisure.

"There's father a-standing at the yard gate," said Martin Poyser. "I reckon he wants to watch us down the field. It's wonderful what sight he has, and him turned seventy-five."

"Ah ! I often think it's wi' th' old folks as it is wi' the babbies," said Mrs. Poyser ; "they're satisfied wi' looking, no matter what they're looking at. It's God A'mighty's way o' quietening 'em, I reckon, afore they go to sleep."

Old Martin opened the gate as he saw the family procession approaching, and held it wide open, leaning on his stick—pleased to do this bit of work ; for, like all old men whose life has been spent in labor, he liked to feel that he was still useful—that there was a better crop of onions in the garden because he was by at the sowing, and that the cows would be milked the better if he staid at home on a Sunday afternoon to look on. He always went to church on Sacrament Sundays, but not very regularly at other times ; on wet Sundays, or whenever he had a touch of rheumatism, he used to read the three first chapters of Genesis instead.

"They'll ha putten Thias Bede i' the ground afore ye get to the church-yard," he said as his son came up. "It 'ud ha' been better luck if they'd ha' burried him i' the forenoon when the rain was fallin' ; there's no likelihoods of a drop now, an' the moon lies like a boat there, dost see ? That's a sure sign o' fair weather ; there's a many as is false, but that's sure."

"Ay. ay." said the son, "I'm in hopes it'll hold up now."

"Mind what the parson says—mind what the parson says, my lads," said grandfather to the black-eyed youngsters in knee-breeches, conscious of a marble or two in their pockets, which they looked forward to handling a little, secretly, during the sermon.

"Dood-by, dandad," said Totty. "Me doin to church. Me dot my netlace on. Dive me a peppermint."

Grandad, shaking with laughter at this "deep little wench," slowly transferred his stick to his left hand, which held the gate open, and slowly thrust his finger into the waistcoat pocket on which Totty had fixed her eyes with a confident look of expectation.

And when they were all gone, the old man leaned on the gate again, watching them across the lane along the Home Close, and through the far gate, till they disappeared behind a bend in the hedge. For the hedgerows in those days shut out one's view, even on the better-managed farms; and this afternoon the dog-roses were tossing out their pink wreaths, the night-shade was in its yellow and purple glory, the pale honey-suckle grew out of reach, peeping high up out of a holly-bush, over all, an ash or a sycamore every now and then threw its shadow across the path.

There were acquaintances at other gates who had to move aside and let them pass; at the gate of the Home Close there was half the dairy of cows standing one behind the other, extremely slow to understand that their large bodies might be in the way; at the far gate there was the mare holding her head over the bars, and beside her the liver-colored foal with its head towards its mother's flank, apparently still much embarrassed by its own straddling existence. The way lay entirely through Mr. Poyser's own fields till they reached the main road leading to the village, and he turned a keen eye on the stock and the crops as they went along, while Mrs. Poyser was ready to supply a running commentary on them all. The woman who manages a dairy has a large share in making the rent, so she may well be allowed to have her opinion on stock and their "keep"—an exercise which strengthens her understanding so much that she finds herself able to give her husband advice on most other subjects.

"There's that short-horned Sally," she said, as they entered the Home Close, and she caught sight of the meek beast that lay chewing the cud, and looking at her with a sleepy eye. "I begin to hate the sight o' the cow; and I say now what I said three weeks ago, the sooner we get rid of her the

better, for there's that little yellow cow as doesn't give half the milk, and yet I've twice as much butter from her."

"Why, thee't not like the women in general," said Mr. Poyser; "they like the short-horns, as gives such a lot o' milk. There's Chowne's wife wants him to buy no other sort."

"What's it sinnify what Chowne's wife likes? a poor soft thing, wi' no more head-piece nor a sparrow. She'd take a big cullender to strain her lard wi', and then wonder as the scratchin's run through. I've seen enough of her to know as I'll niver take a servant from her house again—all hugger-mugger—and you'd niver know, when you went in, whether it was Monday or Friday, the wash draggin' on to th' end o' the week; and as for her cheese, I know well enough it rose like a loaf in a tin last year. An' then she talks o' the weather bein' i' fault, as there's folks 'ud stand on their heads and then say the fault was i' their boots."

"Well, Chowne's been wantin' to buy Sally, so we can get rid of her, if thee lik'st," said Mr. Poyser, secretly proud of his wife's superior power of putting two and two together; indeed, on recent market-days, he had more than once boasted of her discernment in this very matter of short-horns.

"Ah, them as choose a soft for a wife may's well buy up the short-horns, for if you get your head stuck in a bog your legs may's well go after it. Eh! talk o' legs, there's legs for you," Mrs. Poyser continued, as Totty, who had been set down now the road was dry, toddled on in front of her father and mother. "There's shapes! An' she's got such a long foot, she'll be her father's own child."

"Ah, she'll be welly such a one as Hetty i' ten years time, on'y she's got *thy* colored eyes. I never remember a blue eye i' my family; my mother had eyes as black as sloes, just like Hetty's."

"The child 'ull be none the worse for having rummat as isn't like Hetty. An' I'm none for having her so over pretty. Though, for the matter o' that, there's people wi' light hair an' blue eyes as pretty as them wi' black. If Dinah had got a bit o' color in her cheeks, an' didn't stick that Methodist cap on her head, enough to frighten the crows, folks 'ud think her as pretty as Hetty."

"Nay, nay," said Mr. Poyser, with rather a contemptuous emphasis, "thee dostna know the pints of a woman. The men 'ud niver run after Dinah as they would after Hetty."

"What care I what the men 'ud run after? It's well seen

what choice the most of 'em know how to make, by the poor draggle-tails o' wives you see, like bits o' gauze ribbin, good for nothing when the color's gone."

"Well, well, thee canstna say but what I know'd how to make a choice when I married thee," said Mr. Poyser, who usually settled little conjugal disputes by a compliment of this sort; "and thee wast twice as buxom as Dinah ten year ago."

"I niver said a woman had need to be ugly to make a good missis of a house. There's Chowne's wife ugly enough to turn the milk an' save the rennet, but she'll niver save nothing any other way. But as for Dinah, poor child, she's niver likely to be buxom as long as she'll make her dinner o' cake and water, for the sake o' giving to them as want. She provoked me past bearing sometimes; and, as I told her, she went clean again' the Scriptur, for that says, 'Love your neighbor as yourself;' but I said, 'if you loved your neighbor no better nor you do yourself, Dinah, it's little enough you'd do for him. You'd be thinking he might do well enough on a half-empty stomach.' Eh, I wonder where she is this blessed Sunday! sitting by that sick woman, I daresay, as she'd set her heart on going to all of a sudden."

"Ah! it was a pity she should take such megrims int' her head, when she might ha' staid wi' us all summer, and eaten twice as much as she wanted, and it 'ud niver ha' been missed. She made no odds in th' house at all, for she sat as still at her sewing as a bird on the nest, and was uncommon nimble at running to fetch anything. If Hetty gets married, thee'dst like t' ha' Dinah wi' thee constant."

"It's no use thinking o' that," said Mrs. Poyser. "You might as well beckon to the flyin' swallow as ask Dinah to come an' live here comfortable, like other folks. If anything could turn her, I should ha' turned her, for I've talked to her for an hour on end, and scolded her too; for she's my own sister's child, and it behoves me to do what I can for her. But eh, poor thing, as soon as she'd said us 'good-by,' an' got into the car, an' looked back at me with her pale face, as is welly like her aunt Judith come back from heaven, I begun to be frightened to think o' the set-downs I'd given her; for it comes over you sometimes as if she'd a way o' knowing the rights o' things more nor other folks have. But I'll niver give in as that's 'cause she's a Methodist, no more nor a white calf's white 'cause it eats out o' the same bucket wi' a black un."

"Nay," said Mr. Poyser, with as near an approach to a snarl as his good-nature would allow; "I'n no opinion o' the

Methodists. It's on'y tradesfolks as turn Methodists; you never knew a farmer bitten wi' them maggots. There's maybe a workman now an' then, as isn't over clever at's work, takes to preachin' an' that, like Seth Bede. But you see Adam, as has got one o' the best head-pieces hereabout, knows better; he's a good Churchman, else I'd never encourage him for a sweetheart for Hetty."

"Why, goodness me," said Mrs. Poyser, who had looked back while her husband was speaking, "look where Molly is with them lads. They're the field's length behind us. How *could* you let 'em do so, Hetty? Anybody might as well set a picture to watch the children as you. Run back, and tell 'em to come on."

Mr. and Mrs. Poyser were now at the end of the second field, so they set Totty on the top of one of the large stones forming the true Loamshire stile, and awaiting the loiterers; Totty observing, with complacency, "Dey naughty, naughty boys—me dood."

The fact was, that this Sunday walk through the fields was fraught with great excitement to Marty and Tommy, who saw a perpetual drama going on in the hedgerows, and could no more refrain from stopping and peeping than if they had been a couple of spaniels or terriers. Marty was quite sure he saw a yellowhammer on the boughs of the great ash; and while he was peeping, he missed the sight of a white-throated stoat which had run across the path, and was described with much fervor by the junior Tommy. Then there was a little greenfinch, just fledged, fluttering along the ground, and it seemed quite possible to catch it, till it managed to flutter under the blackberry bush. Hetty could not be got to give any heed to these things, so Molly was called on for her ready sympathy, and peeped with open mouth wherever she was told, and said, "Lawks!" whenever she was expected to wonder.

Molly hastened on with some alarm when Hetty had come back and called to them that her aunt was angry; but Marty ran on first, shouting, "We've found the speckled turkey's nest, mother!" with the instinctive confidence that people who bring good news are never in fault.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Poyser, really forgetting all discipline in this pleasant surprise, "that's a good lad; why, where is it?"

"Down in ever such a hole under the hedge. I saw it first, looking after the greenfinch, and she sat on th' nest."

"You didn't frighten her, I hope," said the mother, "else she'll forsake it."

"No, I went away as still, as still," and whispered to Molly, "didn't I, Molly?"

"Well, well, now come on," said Mrs. Poyser, "and walk before father and mother, and take your little sister by the hand. We must go straight on now. Good boys don't look after the birds of a Sunday."

"But, mother," said Marty, "you said you'd give half a crown to find the speckled turkey's nest. Mayn't I have the half crown put into my money-box?"

"We'll see about that, my lad, if you walk along now, like a good boy."

The father and mother exchanged a significant glance of amusement at their eldest-born's acuteness; but on Tommy's round face there was a cloud.

"Mother," he said, half crying, "Marty's got ever so much more money in his box nor I've got in mine."

"Munny, *me* want half a toun in *my* bots," said Totty.

"Hush, hush, hush," said Mrs. Poyser, "did ever any body hear such naughty children? Nobody shall ever see their money-boxes any more if they don't make haste and go on to church."

This dreadful threat had the desired effect, and through the two remaining fields the three pair of small legs trotted on without any serious interruption, notwithstanding a small pond full of tadpoles, alias "bullheads," which the lads looked at wistfully.

The damp hay that must be scattered and turned afresh to-morrow was not a cheering sight to Mr. Poyser, who during hay and corn harvest had often some mental struggles as to the benefits of a day of rest; but no temptation would have induced him to carry on any field work, however early in the morning, on a Sunday; for had not Michael Holdsworth had a pair of oxen "sweltered" while he was plowing on Good Friday? That was demonstration that work on sacred days was a wicked thing; and with wickedness of any sort Martin Poyser was quite clear that he would have nothing to do, since money got by such means would never prosper.

"It a'most makes your fingers itch to be at the hay now the sun shines so," he observed as they passed through the "Big Meadow." "But it's poor foolishness to think o' saving by going against your conscience. There's that Jim Wakefield, as they used to call 'Gentleman Wakefield,' used to do the same of a Sunday as o' week days, and took no heed to right or wrong, as if there was nayther God nor devil. An'

what's he come to? Why, I saw him myself last market-day a-carrying a basket wi' oranges in't."

"Ah! to be sure," said Mrs. Poyser, emphatically, "you make but a poor trap to catch luck if you go and bait it by wickedness. The money as is got so's like to burn holes i' your pocket. I'd niver wish to leave our lads a sixpence but what was got i' the rightful way. And as for the weather, there's One above makes it, and we must put up wi't; it's nothing of a plague to what the wenches are."

Notwithstanding the interruption in their walk, the excellent habit which Mrs. Poyser's clock had of taking time by the forelock, had secured their arrival at the village while it was still a quarter to two, though almost every one who meant to go to church was already within the church-yard gates. Those who staid at home were chiefly mothers, like Timothy's Bess, who stood at her own door nursing her baby, and feeling as women feel in that position—that nothing else can be expected of them.

It was not entirely to see Thias Bede's funeral that the people were standing about the church-yard so long before the service began; that was their common practice. The women, indeed, usually entered the church at once, and the farmer's wives talked in an undertone to each other, over the tall pews, about their illnesses, and the total failure of doctors' stuff, recommending dandelion-tea, and other home-made specifics as far preferable—about the servants, and their growing exorbitance as to wages, whereas the quality of their service declined from year to year, and there was no girl nowadays to be trusted any farther than you could see her—about the bad price Mr. Dingall, the Treddleston grocer, was giving for butter, and the reasonable doubts that might be held as to his solvency, notwithstanding that Mrs. Dingall was a sensible woman, and they were all sorry for *her*, for she had very good kin. Meantime the men lingered outside, and hardly any of them except the singers, who had a humming and fragmentary rehearsal to go through, entered the church until Mr. Irwine was in the desk. They saw no reason for that premature entrance—what could they do in church, if they were there before the service began?—and they did not conceive that any power in the universe could take it ill if they staid out and talked a little about "bis'ness."

Chad Cranage looks quite a new acquaintance to-day, for he has got his clean Sunday face, which always makes his little grand-daughter cry at him as a stranger. But an expe-

rienced eye would have fixed on him at once as the village blacksmith, after seeing the humble deference with which the big, saucy fellow took off his hat and stroked his hair to the farmers ; for Chad was accustomed to say that a working-man must hold a candle to——a personage understood to be as black as he was himself on week days ; by which evil-sounding rule of conduct he meant what was, after all, rather virtuous than otherwise, namely, that men who had horses to be shod must be treated with respect. Chad and the rougher sort of workmen kept aloof from the grave under the white thorn, where the burial was going forward ; but Sandy Jim, and several of the farm laborers, mad a group round it, and stood with their hats off, as fellow-monrners with the mother and sons. Others held a midway position, sometimes watching the group at the grave, sometimes listening to the conversation of the farmers who stood in a knot near the church door, and were now joined by Martin Poyser, while his family passed into the church. On the outside of this knot stood Mr. Casson, the landlord of the Donnithorne Arms, in his most striking attitude—that is to say, with the forefinger of his right hand thrust between the buttons of his waistcoat, his left hand in his breeches pocket, and his head very much on one side ; looking, on the whole, like an actor who has only a monosyllabic part intrusted to him, but feels sure that the audience discern his fitness for the leading business ; curiously in contrast with old Jonathan Burge, who held his hands behind him, and leaned forward, coughing asthmatically, with an inward scorn of all knowingness that could not be turned into cash. The talk was in rather a lower tone than usual to-day, hushed a little by the sound of Mr. Irwine's voice reading the final prayers of the burial service. They had all had their word of pity for poor Thias, but now they had got upon the nearer subject of their own grievances against Satchell, the Squire's bailiff, who played the part of steward, so far as it was not performed by old Mr. Donnithorne himself, for that gentleman had the meanness to receive his own rents and make bargains about his own timber. This subject of conversation was an additional reason for not being loud, since Satchell himself might presently be walking up the paved road to the church door. And soon they became suddenly silent ; for Mr. Irwine's voice had ceased, and the group round the white thorn was dispersing itself toward the church.

They all moved aside, and stood with their hats off, while Mr. Irwine passed. Adam and Seth were coming next, with

their mother between then ; for Joshua Rann officiated as head sexton as well as clerk, and was not yet ready to follow the rector into the vestry. But there was a pause before the three mourners came on ; Lisbeth had turned round to look again toward the grave. Ah ! there was nothing now but the brown earth under the white thorn. Yet she cried less to-day than she had done any day since her husband's death ; along with all her grief there was mixed an unusual sense of her own importance in having a " burial," and in Mr. Irwine's reading a special service for her husband ; and besides, she knew the funeral psalm was going to be sung for him. She felt this counter-excitement to her sorrow still more strongly as she walked with her sons toward the church door, and saw the friendly sympathetic nods of their fellow-parishioners.

The mother and sons passed into the church, and one by one the loiterers followed, though some still lingered without ; the sight of Mr. Donnithorne's carriage, which was winding slowly up the hill, perhaps helping to make them feel that there was no need for haste.

But presently the sound of the bassoon and the key-bugles burst forth ; the evening hymn, which always opened the service, had begun, and every one must now enter and take his place.

I cannot say that the interior of Hayslope church was remarkable for anything except for the gray age of its oaken pews—great square pews mostly, ranged on each side of a narrow aisle. It was free, indeed, from the modern blemish of galleries. The choir had two narrow pews to themselves in the middle of the right-hand row, so that it was a short process for Joshua Rann to take his place among them as principal bass, and return to his desk after the singing was over. The pulpit and desk, gray and old as the pews, stood on one side of the arch leading into the chancel, which also had its gray square pews for Mr. Donnithorne's family and servants. Yet I assure you those gray pews, with the buff-washed walls, gave a very pleasing tone to this shabby interior, and agreed extremely well with the ruddy faces and bright waistcoats. And there were liberal touches of crimson toward the chancel, for the pulpit and Mr. Donnithorne's own pew had handsome crimson cloth cushions ; and, to close the vista, there was a crimson altar-cloth, embroidered with golden rays by Miss Lydia's own hand.

But even without the crimson cloth, the effect must have been warm and cheering when Mr. Irwine was in the desk,

looking benignly round on that simple congregation—on the hardy old men, with bent knees and shoulders perhaps, but with vigor left for much hedge-clipping and thatching ; on the tall stalwart frames and roughly-cut bronzed faces of the stone-cutters and carpenters ; on the half-dozen well-to-do farmers, with their apple-cheeked families ; and on the clean old women, mostly farm-laborers' wives, with their bit of snow-white cap-border under their black bonnets, and with their withered arms, bare from the elbow, folded passively over their chests. For none of the old people held books—why should they ? not one of them could read. Bet they knew a few “good words” by heart, and their withered lips now and then moved silently, following the service without any very clear comprehension indeed, but with a simple faith in its efficacy to ward off harm and bring blessing. And now all faces were visible, for all were standing up—the little children on the seats, peeping over the edge of the gray pews—while good old Bishop Ken's evening hymn was being sung to one of those lively psalm-tunes which died out with the last generation of rectors and choral parish-clerks. Melodies die out, like the pipe of Pan, with the ears that love them and listen for them. Adam was not in his usual place among the singers to-day, for he sat with his mother and Seth, and he noticed with surprise that Bartle Massey was absent too ; all the more agreeable for Mr. Joshua Rann, who gave out his bass notes with unusual complacency, and threw an extra ray of severity into the glances he sent over his spectacles at the recusant Will Maskery.

I beseech you to imagine Mr. Irwine looking round on this scene, in his ample white surplice that became him so well, with his powdered hair thrown back, his rich brown complexion, and his finely-cut nostril and upper lip ; for there was a certain virtue in that benignant yet keen countenance, as there is in all human faces from which a generous soul beams out. And over all streamed the delicious June sunshine through the old windows, with their desultory patches of yellow, red, and blue, that threw pleasant touches of color on the opposite wall.

I think, as Mr. Irwine looked round to-day, his eyes rested an instant longer than usual on the spare pew occupied by Martin Poyser and his family. And there was another pair of dark eyes that found it impossible not to wander thither, and rest on that round pink-and-white figure. But Hetty was at that moment quite careless of any glances—she

was absorbed in the thought that Arthur Donnithorne would soon be coming into church, for the carriage must surely be at the church gate by this time. She had never seen him since she parted with him in the wood on Thursday evening, and oh! how long the time had seemed! Things had gone on just the same as ever that evening; the wonders that had happened then had brought no changes after them; they were already like a dream. When she heard the church door swinging, her heart beat so she dared not look up. She felt that her aunt was courtesying! she courtesied herself. That must be old Mr. Donnithorne—he always came first, the wrinkled small old man, peering round with short-sighted glances at the bowing and courtesying congregation; then she knew Miss Lydia was passing, and though Hetty liked so much to look at her fashionable little coal-scuttle bonnet, with the wreath of small roses round it, she didn't mind it to-day. But there were no more courtesies—no, he was not come; she felt sure there was nothing else passing the pew door but the housekeeper's black bonnet, and the lady's-maid's beautiful straw that had once been Miss Lydia's, and then the powdered heads of the butler and footman. No, he was not there; yet she would look now—she might be mistaken—for, after all, she had not looked. So she lifted up her eyelids and glanced timidly at the cushioned pew in the chancel; there was no one but old Mr. Donnithorne rubbing his spectacles with his white handkerchief, and Miss Lydia opening the large gilt-edged prayer-book. The chill disappointment was too hard to bear; she felt herself turning pale, her lips trembling; she was ready to cry. Oh, what *should* she do? Everybody would know the reason; they would know she was crying because Arthur was not there. And Mr. Craig, with the wonderful hot-house plant in his button-hole, was staring at her, she knew. It was dreadfully long before the General Confession began, so that she could kneel down. Two great drops *would* fall then, but no one saw them except good-natured Molly, for her aunt and uncle knelt with their backs toward her. Molly, unable to imagine any cause for tears in church except faintness, of which she had a vague traditional knowledge, drew out of her pocket a queer little flat blue smelling-bottle, and after much labor in pulling the cork out, thrust the narrow neck against Hetty's nostrils. "It donna smell," she whispered, thinking this was a great advantage which old salts had over fresh ones: they did you good without biting your nose. Hetty pushed it away peevishly; but

this little flash of temper did what the salts could not have done—it roused her to wipe away the traces of her tears, and try with all her might not to shed any more. Hetty had a certain strength in her vain little nature; she would have borne anything rather than be laughed at, or pointed at with any other feeling than admiration; she would have pressed her own nails into her tender flesh rather than people should know a secret she did not want them to know.

What fluctuations there were in her busy thoughts and feelings, while Mr. Irwine was pronouncing the solemn "Absolution" in her deaf ears, and through all the tones of petition that followed! Anger lay very close to disappointment, and soon won the victory over the conjectures her small ingenuity could devise to account for Arthur's absence on the supposition that he really wanted to come, really wanted to see her again. And by the time she rose from her knees mechanically, because all the rest were rising, the color had returned to her cheeks even with a heightened glow, for she was framing little indignant speeches to herself, saying she hated Arthur for giving her this pain—she would like him to suffer too. Yet, while this selfish tumult was going on in her soul, her eyes were bent down on her prayer-book, and the eyelids with their dark fringe looked as lovely as ever. Adam Bede thought so as he glanced at her for a moment on rising from his knees.

But Adam's thoughts of Hetty did not deafen him to the service; they rather blended with all the other deep feelings for which the church service was a channel to him this afternoon, as a certain consciousness of our entire past and our imagined future blends itself with all our moments of keen sensibility. And to Adam the Church service was the best channel he could have found for his mingled regret, yearning, and resignation; its interchange of beseeching cries for help with outbursts of faith and praise—its recurrent responses and the familiar rhythm of its collects, seemed to speak for him as no other form of worship could have done; as, to those early Christians who had worshipped from their childhood upward in catacombs, the torchlight and shadows must have seemed nearer the Divine presence than the heathenish daylight of the streets. The secret of our emotions never lies in the bare object, but in its subtle relations to our own past; no wonder the secret escapes the unsympathizing observer, who might as well put on his spectacles to discern odors.

But there was one reason why even a chance comer would

have found the service in Hayslope Church more impressive than in most other village nooks in the kingdom—a reason, of which I am sure you have not the slightest suspicion. It was the reading of our friend Joshua Rann. Where that good shoemaker got his notion of reading from, remained a mystery even to his most intimate acquaintances. I believe, after all, he got it chiefly from Nature, who had poured some of her music into this honest conceited soul, as she had been known to do into other narrow souls before his. She had given him, at least, a fine bass voice and a musical ear; but I cannot positively say whether these alone had tended to inspire him with the rich chant in which he delivered the responses. The way he rolled from a rich deep forte into a melancholy cadence, subsiding, at the end of the last word, into a sort of faint resonance, like the lingering vibrations of a violoncello, I can compare to nothing for its strong calm melancholy but the rush and cadence of the wind among the autumn boughs. This may seem a strange mode of speaking about the reading of a parish clerk—a man in rusty spectacles, with stubby hair, a large occiput, and a prominent crown. But that is Nature's way; she will allow a gentleman of splendid physiognomy and poetic aspirations to sing wofully out of tune, and not give him the slightest hint of it; and takes care that some narrow-browed fellow trolling a ballad to the corner of a pot-house, shall be true to his intervals as a bird.

Joshua himself was less proud of his reading than of his singing, and it was always with a sense of heightened importance that he passed from his desk to the choir. Still more to-day; it was a special occasion; for an old man, familiar to all the parish, had died a sad death—not in his bed, a circumstance the most painful to the mind of the peasant—and now the funeral psalm was to be sung in memory of his sudden departure. Moreover, Bartle Massey was not at church, and Joshua's importance in the choir suffered no eclipse. It was a solemn minor strain they sang. The old psalm-tunes have many a wail among them, and the words,

“Thou sweep'st us off as with a flood;
We vanish hence like dreams”—

seemed to have a closer application than usual, in the death of poor Thias. The mother and sons listened, each with peculiar feelings. Lisbeth had a vague belief that the psalm was doing her husband good; it was part of that decent burial which she would have thought it a greater wrong to withhold

from him than to have caused him many unhappy days while he was living. The more there was said about her husband, the more there was done for him, surely the safer he would be. It was poor Lisbeth's blind way of feeling that human love and pity are a ground of faith in some other love. Seth, who was easily touched, shed tears, and tried to recall, as he had done continually since his father's death, all that he had heard of the possibility that a single moment of consciousness at the last might be a moment of pardon and reconciliation ; for was it not written in the very psalm they were singing, that the Divine dealings were not measured and circumscribed by time ? Adam had never been unable to join in a psalm before. He had known plenty of trouble and vexation since he had been a lad ; but this was the first sorrow that had hemmed in his voice, and strangely enough it was sorrow because the chief source of his past trouble and vexation was forever gone out of his reach. He had not been able to press his father's hand before their parting, and say, " Father, you know it was all right between us ; I never forgot what I owed you when I was a lad ; you forgive me if I have been too hot and hasty now and then ! " Adam thought but little to-day of the hard work and earnings he had spent on his father ; his thoughts ran constantly on what the old man's feelings had been in moments of humiliation, when he had held down his head before the rebukes of his son. When our indignation is borne in submissive silence, we are apt to feel twinges of doubt afterward as to our own generosity, if not justice ; how much more when the object of our anger has gone into everlasting silence, and we have seen his face for the last time in the meekness of death ?

" Ah ! I was always too hard," Adam said to himself. " It's a sore fault in me as I'm so hot and out o' patience with people when they do wrong, and my heart gets shut up against 'em, so as I can't bring myself to forgive 'em. I see clear enough there's more pride nor love in my soul, for I could sooner make a thousand strokes with th' hammer for my father than bring myself to say a kind word to him. And there went plenty o' pride and temper to the strokes, as the devil *will* be having his finger in what we call our duties as well as our sins. Mayhap the best thing I ever done in my life was only doing what was easiest for myself. It's allays been easier for me to work nor to sit still, but the real tough job for me 'ud be to master my own will and temper, and go right against my own pride. It seems to me now, if I was to find father at

home to-night, I should behave different ; but there's no knowing—perhaps nothing 'ud be a lesson to us if it didn't come too late. It's well we should feel as life's a reckoning we can't make twice over ; there's no real making amends in this world, any more nor you can mend a wrong subtraction by doing your addition right."

This was the key-note to which Adam's thoughts had perpetually returned since his father's death, and the solemn wail of the funeral psalm was only an influence that brought back the old thoughts with stronger emphasis. So was the sermon which Mr. Irwine had chosen with reference to Thias's funeral. It spoke briefly and simply of the words, "In the midst of life we are in death"—how the present moment is all we can tell our own for works of mercy, of righteous dealing, and of family tenderness. All very old truths—but what we thought the oldest truth becomes the most startling to us in the week when we had looked on the dead face of one who has made a part of our own lives. For when men want to impress us with the effect of a new and wonderfully vivid light, do they not let it fall on the most familiar object, that we may measure its intensity by remembering the former dimness?

Then came the moment of the final blessing, when the forever sublime words, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding," seemed to blend with the calm afternoon sunshine that fell on the bowed heads of the congregation ; and then the quiet rising, the mothers tying on the bonnets of the little maidens who had slept through the sermon, the fathers collecting the prayer-books, until all streamed out through the old archway into the green church-yard, and began their neighborly talk, their simple civilities, and their invitations to tea ; for on a Sunday every one was ready to receive a guest—it was the day when all must be in their best clothes, and their best humor.

Mr. and Mrs. Poyser paused a minute at the church gate ; they were waiting for Adam to come up, not being contented to go away without saying a kind word to the widow and her sons.

"Well, Mrs. Bede," said Mrs. Poyser, as they walked on together, "you must keep up your heart ; husbands and wives must be content when they've lived to rear their children and see on another's hair gray."

"Ay, ay," said Mr. Poyser ; "they wonna have long to wait for one another then, anyhow. And ye've got two o' the strapping'st sons i' the country ; and well you may, for I re-

member poor Thias as fine a broad-shouldered fellow as need to be ; and as for you, Mrs. Bede, why you're straighter i' the back nor half the young women now."

"Eh!" said Lisbeth, "it's poor luck for the platter to wear twell when it's broke i' two. The sooner I'm laid under the horn, the better. I'm no good to nobody now."

Adam never took notice of his mother's little unjust complaints ; but Seth said, "Nay, mother, thee mustna say so. Thy sons 'ull never get another mother."

"That's true, lad—that's true," said Mr. Poyser ; "and it's wrong on us to give way to grief, Mrs. Bede, for it's like the children cryin' when the fathers and mothers take things from 'em. There's one above knows better nor us."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Poyser, "an' it's poor work allays settin' the dead above the livin'. We shall all on us be dead some time, I reckon ; it 'ud be better if folks 'ud make much on us beforehand i'stid o' beginnin' when we're gone. It's but little good you'll do a-watering the last year's crop."

"Well, Adam," said Mr. Poyser, feeling that his wife's words were, as usual, rather incisive than soothing, and that it would be well to change the subject, "you'll come and see us again now, I hope. I hanna had a talk with you this long while, and the missis here wants you to see what can be done with her best spinning-wheel, for it's got broke, and it'll be a nice job to mend it ; there'll want a bit o' turning. You'll come as soon as you can, now, will you?"

Mr. Poyser paused and looked round while he was speaking, as if to see where Hetty was, for the children were running on before. Hetty was not without a companion, and she had, besides, more pink and white about her than ever ; for she held in her hand the wonderful pink-and-white hot-house plant, with a very long name—a Scotch name, she supposed, since people said Mr. Craig the gardener was Scotch. Adam took the opportunity of looking round too, and I am sure you will not require of him that he should feel any vexation in observing a pouting expression on Hetty's face as she listened to the gardener's small talk. Yet in her secret heart she was glad to have him by her side, for she would, perhaps, learn from him how it was Arthur had not come to church. Not that she cared to ask him the question, but she hoped the information would be given spontaneously ; for Mr. Craig, like a superior man, was very fond of giving information.

Mr. Craig was never aware that his conversation and advances were received coldly, for to shift one's point of view

beyond certain limits is impossible to the most liberal and expansive mind : we are none of us aware of the impression we produce on Brazilian monkeys of feeble understanding ; it is possible they see hardly anything in us. Moreover, Mr. Craig was a man of sober passions, and was already in his tenth year of hesitation as to the relative advantages of matrimony and bachelorhood. It is true that, now and then, when he had been a little heated by an extra glass of grog, he had been heard to say of Hetty that the "lass was well enough," and that "a man might do worse;" but on convivial occasions men are apt to express themselves strongly.

Martin Poyser held Mr. Craig in honor as a man who "knew his business," and who had great lights concerning soils and compost ; but he was less of a favorite with Mrs. Poyser, who had more than once said in confidence to her husband, "You're mighty fond o' Craig ; but for my part, I think he's welly like a cock as think's the sun's rose o' purpose to hear him crow." For the rest, Mr. Craig was an estimable gardener, and was not without reasons for having a high opinion of himself. He had also high shoulders and high cheek-bones, and hung his head forward a little as he walked along with his hands in his breeches pockets. I think it was his pedigree only that had the advantage of being Scotch, and not his "bringing up ;" for, except that he had a stronger burr in his accent, his speech differed little from that of the Loamshire people about him. But a gardener is Scotch, as a French teacher is Parisian.

"Well, Mr. Poyser," he said, before the good slow farmer had time to speak, "ye'll not be carrying your hay to-morrow, I'm thinking ; the glass sticks at 'change,' and ye may rely upo' my word as we'll ha' more downfall afore twenty-four hours is past. Ye see that darkish-blue cloud there upo' the 'rizon—you know what I mean by the 'rizon, where the land and sky seems to meet."

"Ay, ay, I see the cloud," said Mr. Poyser, "'rizon or no 'rizon. It's right o'er Mike Holdsworth's fallow. and a foul fallow it is."

"Well, you mark my words, as that cloud 'ull spread o'er the sky pretty nigh as quick as you'd spread a tarpaulin over one o' your hayricks. It's a great thing to ha' studied the look o' the clouds. Lord bless you ! the met'orological almanecs can learn me nothing, but there's a pretty sight o' things I could let *them* up to if they'd just come to me. And how are *you*, Mrs. Poyser ? thinkin' o' getherin' the red currants

soon, I reckon. You'd a deal better gether 'em afore they're o'er ripe wi' such wether as we've got to look forward to. How do ye do, Mistress Bede?" Mr. Craig continued, without a pause, nodding, by the way, to Adam and Seth. "I hope y' enjoyed them spinach and gooseberries as I sent Chester with th' other day. If ye want vegetables while ye're in trouble, ye know where to come to. It's well known I'm not giving other folks's things away; for when I've supplied the house, the garden's my own spekilation, and it isna every man th' old squire could get as 'ud be equil to th' undertaking, let alone asking whether he'd be willing. I've got to run my calkilation fine, I can tell you, to make sure o' getting back the money as I pay the squire. I should like to see some o' them fellows as make th' almanecs looking as far before their noses as I've got to do every year as comes."

"They look pretty fur, though," said Mr. Poyser, turning his head on one side, and speaking in rather a subdued, reverential tone. "Why, what could come truer nor that pictur o' the cock wi' the big spurs, as has got its head knocked down wi' th' anchor, an' the firin', and the ships behind? Why, that pictur was made afore Christmas, and yit it's come as true as th' Bible. Why, th' cock's France, an' th' anchor's Nelson—an' they told us that beforehand."

"Pee—ee-eh!" said Mr. Craig. "A man dosena want to see fur to know as th' English 'ull beat the French. Why, I know upo' good authority as it's a big Frenchman as reaches five foot high, an' they live upo' spoon-meat mostly. I knew a man as his father had a particular knowledge o' the French. I should like to know what them grasshoppers are to do against such fine fellows as our young Captain Arthur. Why, it 'ud astonish a Frenchman only to look at him; his arm's thicker nor a Frenchman's body, I'll be bound, for they pinch theirselves in wi' stays; and it's easy enough, for they've got nothing i' their insides."

"Where is the Captain, as he was'n at church to-day?" said Adam. "I was talking to him o' Friday, and he said nothing about his going away."

"Oh, he's only gone to Eagledale for a bit o' fishing; I reckon he'll be back again afore many days are o'er, for he's to be at all th' arranging and preparing o' things for the comin' o' age o' the thirtieth o' July. But he's fond o' getting away for a bit, now and then. Him and th' old squire fit one another like frost and flowers."

Mr. Craig smiled and winked slowly as he made this last

observation, but the subject was not developed farther, for now they had reached the turning in the road where Adam and his companions must say "good-by." The gardener, too, would have had to turn off in the same direction if he had not accepted Mr. Poyser's invitation to tea. Mrs. Poyser duly seconded the invitation, for she would have held it a deep disgrace not to make her neighbors welcome to her house; personal likes and dislikes must not interfere with that sacred custom. Moreover, Mr. Craig had always been full of civilities to the family at the Hall Farm, and Mrs. Poyser was scrupulous in declaring that she had "nothing to say against him, on'y it was a pity he couldna be hatched o'er again, an' hatched different."

So Adam and Seth, with their mother between them, wound their way down to the valley and up again to the old house, where a saddened memory had taken the place of a long, long anxiety—where Adam would never have to ask again as he entered, "Where's father?"

And the other family party, with Mr. Craig for company, went back to the pleasant bright house-place at the Hall Farm—all with quiet minds, except Hetty, who knew now where Arthur was gone, but was only the more puzzled and uneasy. For it appeared that his absence was quite voluntary; he need not have gone—he would not have gone if he had wanted to see her. She had a sickening sense that no lot could ever be pleasant to her again if her Thursday night's vision was not fulfilled; and in this moment of chill, bare, wintry disappointment and doubt, she looked toward the possibility of being with Arthur again, of meeting his loving glance and hearing his soft words, with that eager yearning which one may call the "growing pain" of passion.

CHAPTER XIX.

ADAM ON A WORKING-DAY.

NOTWITHSTANDING Mr. Craig's prophecy, the dark-blue cloud dispersed itself without having produced the threatening consequences. "The weather," as he observed the next morning—"the weather, you see, 's a ticklish thing, an' a

fool 'ull hit on't sometimes when a wise man misses ; that's why the almanecs gets so much credit. It's one o' them chancy things as fools thrive on."

This unreasonable behavior of the weather, however, could displease no one else in Hayslope besides Mr. Craig. All hands were to be out in the meadows this morning as soon as the dew had risen ; the wives and daughters did double work in every farmhouse, that the maids might give their help in tossing the hay ; and when Adam was marching along the lanes, with his basket of tools over his shoulder, he caught the sound of jocose talk and ringing laughter from behind the hedges. The jocose talk of haymakers is best at a distance ; like those clumsy bells round the cows' necks, it has rather a coarse sound when it comes close, and may even grate on your ears painfully ; but heard from far off, it mingles very prettily with the other joyous sounds of nature. Men's muscles move better when their souls are making merry music, though their merriment is of a poor blundering sort, not at all like the merriment of birds.

And perhaps there is no time in a summer's day more cheering than when the warmth of the sun is just beginning to triumph over the freshness of the morning—when there is just a lingering hint of early coolness to keep off languor under the delicious influence of warmth. The reason Adam was walking along the lanes at this time was because his work for the rest of the day lay at a country house about three miles off, which was being put in repair for the son of a neighboring squire ; and he had been busy since early morning with the packing of panels, doors, and chimney-pieces in a wagon, which was now gone on before him, while Jonathan Burge himself had ridden to the spot on horseback, to await its arrival and direct the workmen.

This little walk was a rest to Adam, and he was unconsciously under the charm of the moment. It was summer morning in his heart, and he saw Hetty in the sunshine—a sunshine without glare, with slanting rays that tremble between the delicate shadows of the leaves. He thought, yesterday, when he put out his hand to her as they came out of church, that there was a touch of melancholy kindness in her face such as he had not seen before, and he took it as a sign that she had some sympathy for his family trouble. Poor fellow ! that touch of melancholy came from quite another source ; but how was he to know ? We look at the one little woman's face we love, as we look at the face of our mother

earth, and see all sorts of answers to our own yearnings. It was impossible for Adam not to feel that what had happened in the last week had brought the prospect of marriage nearer to him. Hitherto he had felt keenly the danger that some other man might step in and get possession of Hetty's heart and hand, while he himself was still in a position that made him shrink from asking her to accept him. Even if he had had a strong hope that she was fond of him—and his hope was far from being strong—he had been too heavily burdened with other claims to provide a home for himself and Hetty—a home such as he could expect her to be contented with after the comfort and plenty of the Farm. Like all strong natures, Adam had confidence in his ability to achieve something in the future; he felt sure he should some day, if he lived, be able to maintain a family and make a good broad path for himself; but he had too cool a head not to estimate to the full the obstacles that were to be overcome. And the time would be so long! And there was Hetty, like a bright-cheeked apple hanging over the orchard wall, in sight of everybody, and everybody must long for her! To be sure, if she loved him very much, she would be content to wait for him; but *did* she love him? His hopes had never risen so high that he had dared to ask her. He was clear-sighted enough to be aware that her uncle and aunt would have looked kindly on his suit, and indeed without this encouragement he would never have persevered in going to the Farm; but it was impossible to come to any but fluctuating conclusions about Hetty's feelings. She was like a kitten, and had the same distractingly pretty looks, that meant nothing, for everybody that came near her.

But now he could not help saying to himself that the heaviest part of his burden was removed, and that even before the end of another year his circumstances might be brought into a shape that would allow him to think of marrying. It would always be a hard struggle with his mother, he knew; she would be jealous of any wife he might choose, and she had set her mind especially against Hetty—perhaps for no other reason than that she suspected Hetty to be the woman he *had* chosen. It would never do, he feared, for his mother to live in the same house with him when he was married; and yet how hard she would think it if he asked her to leave him! Yes, there was a great deal of pain to be gone through with his mother, but it was a case in which he must make her feel that his will was strong—it would be better for her in the end.

For himself he would have liked that they should all live together till Seth was married, and they might have built a bit themselves to the old house, and made more room. He did not like "to part wi' th' lad;" they had hardly ever been separated for more than a day since they were born.

But Adam had no sooner caught his imagination leaping forward in this way—making arrangements for an uncertain future—than he checked himself. "A pretty building I'm making, without either bricks or timber. I'm up in the garret a'ready, and haven't so much as dug the foundation." Whenever Adam was strongly convinced of any proposition, it took the form of a principle in his mind; it was knowledge to be acted on, as much as the knowledge that damp will cause rust. Perhaps here lay the secret of the hardness he had accused himself of; he had too little fellow-feeling with the weakness that errs in spite of foreseen consequences. Without this fellow-feeling, how are we to get enough patience and charity toward our stumbling, fallen companions in the long and changeful journey? And there is but one way in which a strong determined soul can learn it—by getting his heart-strings bound round the weak and erring, so that he must share not only the outward consequence of their error, but their inward suffering. That is a long and hard lesson, and Adam had at present only learned the alphabet of it in his father's sudden death, which, by annihilating in an instant all that had stimulated his indignation, had sent a sudden rush of thought and memory over what had claimed his pity and tenderness.

But it was Adam's strength, not its correlative hardness, that influenced his meditations this morning. He had long made up his mind that it would be wrong as well as foolish for him to marry a blooming young girl, so long as he had no other prospect than that of growing poverty with a growing family. And his savings had been so constantly drawn upon (besides the terrible sweep of paying for Seth's substitute in the militia), that he had not enough money beforehand to furnish even a small cottage, and keep something in reserve against a rainy day. He had good hope that he should be "firmer on his legs" by and by; but he could not be satisfied with a vague confidence in his arm and brain; he must have definite plans, and set about them at once. The partnership with Jonathan Burge was not to be thought of at present—there were things implicitly tacked to it that he could not accept; but Adam thought that he and Seth might carry on a little

business for themselves in addition to their journeyman's work, by buying a small stock of superior wood and making articles of household furniture, for which Adam had no end of contrivances. Seth might gain more by working at separate jobs under Adam's direction than by his journeyman's work, and Adam in his over-hours, could do all the "nice" work, that required peculiar skill. The money gained in this way, with the good wages he received as foreman, would soon enable them to get beforehand with the world, so sparingly as they would all live now. No sooner had this little plan shaped itself in his mind than he began to be busy with exact calculations about the wood to be bought, and the particular article of furniture that should be undertaken first—a kitchen cupboard of his contrivance, with such an ingenious arrangement of sliding-doors and bolts, such convenient nooks for stowing household provender, and such a symmetrical result to the eye, that every good housewife would be in raptures with it, and fall through all the gradations of melancholy longing till her husband promised to buy it for her. Adam pictured to himself Mrs. Poyser examining it with her keen eye, and trying in vain to find out a deficiency; and of course, close to Mrs. Poyser stood Hetty, and Adam was again beguiled from calculations and contrivances into dreams and hopes. Yes, he would go and see her this evening—it was so long since he had been at the Hall Farm. He would have liked to go to the night-school, to see why Bartle Massey had not been at church yesterday, for he feared his old friend was ill; but, unless he could manage both visits, this last must be put off till to-morrow—the desire to be near Hetty, and to speak to her again, was too strong.

As he made up his mind to this, he was coming very near to the end of his walk, within the sound of the hammers at work on the refitting of the old house. The sound of tools to a clever workman who loves his work, is like the tentative sounds of the orchestra to the violinist who has to bear his part in the overture; the strong fibres begin their accustomed thrill, and what was a moment before joy, vexation, or ambition, begins its change into energy. All passion becomes strength when it has an outlet from the narrow limits of our personal lot in the labor of our right arm, the cunning of our right hand, or the still, creative activity of our thought. Look at Adam through the rest of the day, as he stands on the scaffolding with the two-feet ruler in his hand, whistling low while he considers how a difficulty about a floor-joist or a

window-frame is to be overcome ; or as he pushes one of the younger workmen aside, and takes his place in upheaving a weight of timber, saying, "Let alone, lad ! thee'st got too much gristle i' thy bones yet ;" or as he fixes his keen black eyes on the motions of a workmen on the other side of the room, and warns him that his distances are not right. Look at this broad-shouldered man with the bare muscular arms, and the thick, firm black hair tossed about like trodden meadow-grass whenever he takes off his paper cap, and with the strong baritone voice bursting every now and then into loud and solemn psalm-tunes, as if seeking some outlet for superfluous strength, yet presently checking himself, apparently crossed with some thought which jars with the singing. Perhaps, if you had not been already in the secret, you might not have guessed what sad memories, what warm affection, what tender fluttering hopes, had their home in this athletic body with the broken finger-nails—in this rough man, who knew no better lyrics than he could find in the Old and New Version and an occasional hymn ; who knew the smallest possible amount of profane history ; and for whom the motion and shape of the earth, the course of the sun, and the changes of the seasons, lay in the region of mystery just made visible by fragmentary knowledge. It has cost Adam a great deal of trouble, and work in over-hours, to know what he knew over and above the secrets of his handicraft, and that acquaintance with mechanics and figures, and the nature of the materials he worked with, which was made easy to him by inborn inherited faculty—to get the mastery of his pen, and write a plain hand, to spell without any other mistakes than must in fairness be attributed to the unreasonable character of orthography rather than to any deficiency in the speller, and, moreover, to learn his musical notes and part-singing. Besides all this, he had read his Bible, including the apocryphal books ; "Poor Richard's Almanac," Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying," "The Pilgrim's Progress," with Bunyan's Life and "Holy War," a great deal of Bailey's Dictionary, "Valentine and Orson," and part of a "History of Babylon" which Bartle Massey had lent him. He might have had many more books from Bartle Massey, but he had no time for reading "the common print," as Lisbeth called it, so busy as he was with figures in all the leisure moments which he did not fill up with extra carpentry.

Adam, you perceive, was by no means a marvellous man, nor, properly speaking, a genius, yet I will not pretend that

his was an ordinary character among workmen ; and it would not be at all a safe conclusion that the next best man you may happen to see with a basket of tools over his shoulder and a paper cap on his head has the strong conscience and the strong sense, the blended susceptibility and self-command of our friend Adam. He was not an average man. Yet such men as he are reared here and there in every generation of our peasant artisans—with an inheritance of affections nurtured by a simple family life of common need and common industry, and an inheritance of faculties trained in skilful, courageous labor ; they make their way upward, rarely as geniuses, most commonly as painstaking, honest men, with the skill and conscience to do well the tasks that lie before them. Their lives have no discernible echo beyond the neighborhood where they dwelt, but you are almost sure to find there some good piece of road, some building, some application of mineral produce, some improvement in farming practice, some reform of parish abuses, with which their names are associated by one or two generations after them. Their employers were the richer for them, the work of their hands has worn well, and the work of their brains has guided well the hands of other men. They went about in their youth in flannel or paper caps, in coats black with coal-dust or streaked with lime and red paint ; in old age their white hairs are seen in a place of honor at church and at market, and they tell their well-dressed sons and daughters seated round the bright hearth on winter evenings, how pleased they were when they first earned their twopence a day. Others there are who die poor, and never put off the workman's coat on week-days ; they have not had the art of getting rich ; but they are men of trust, and when they die before the work is all out of them, it is as if some main screw had got loose in a machine ; the master who employed them says : "Where shall I find their like ?"

CHAPTER XX.

ADAM VISITS THE HALL FARM.

ADAM came back from his work in the empty wagon ; that was why he had changed his clothes, and was ready to set out to the Hall Farm when it still wanted a quarter to seven.

"What's thee got thy Sunday cloose on for?" said Lisbeth, complainingly, as he came down stairs. "Thee artna goin' to th' school i' thy best coat?"

"No, mother," said Adam, quietly. "I'm going to the Hall Farm, but maybe I may go to the school after, so thee mustna wonder if I'm a bit late. Seth 'ull be at home in half an hour—he's only gone to the village, so thee wotna mind."

"Eh! an' what's thee got thy best cloose on for to go th' Hall Farm? The Poyser folks see'd thee in 'em yesterday, I warrand. What dost mean by turnin' worki'day into Sunday a-that'n? It's poor keepin' company wi' folks as donna like to see thee i' thy workin' jacket."

"Good-by, mother, I can't stay," said Adam putting on his hat and going out.

But he had no sooner gone a few paces beyond the door than Lisbeth became uneasy at the thought that she had vexed him. Of course, the secret of her objection to the best clothes was her suspicion that they were put on for Hetty's sake; but deeper than all her peevishness lay the need that her son should love her. She hurried after him, and laid hold of his arm before he had got half way down to the brook, and said, "Nay, my lad thee wotna go away angered wi' thy mother, an' her got nought to do but to sit by hersen an' think on thee?"

"Nay, nay, mother," said Adam, gravely, and standing still while he put his arm on her shoulder, "I'm not angered; but I wish, for thy own sake, thee'dst be more contented to let me do what I've made up my mind to do. I'll never be no other than a good son to thee as long as we live. But a man has other feelings besides what he owes to's father and mother, and thee oughtna to want to rule over me body and soul. And thee must make up thy mind, as I'll not give way to thee where I've a right to do what I like. So let us have no more words about it."

"Eh!" said Lisbeth, not willing to show that he felt the real bearing of Adam's words. "an' who likes to s e thee i' thy best cloose better nor thy mother? An when thee'st got thy face washed as clean as the smooth white pibble, an' thy hair combed so nice, an' thy eyes a-sparklin'—what else is there as thy old mother should like to look at half so well? An' thee sha't put on thy Sunday cloose when thee lik'st for me—I'll ne'er plague thee no moor about'n."

"Well, well; good-by, mother," said Adam, kissing her, and hurrying away. He saw there was no other means of

putting an end to the dialogue. Lisbeth stood still on the spot, shading her eyes and looking after him till he was quite out of sight. She felt to the full all the meaning that had lain in Adam's words, and, as she lost sight of him and turned back slowly into the house, she said aloud to herself—for it was her way to speak her thoughts aloud in the long days, when her husband and sons were at their work—"Eh! he'll be tellin' me as he's goin' to bring her home one o' these days; an' she'll be missis o'er me, an' I mun look on, belike, while she uses the blue-edged platters, an' breaks 'em, mayhap, though there's ne'er been one broke sin' my old man an' me bought 'em at the fair twenty 'ear come next Whissuntide. Eh!" she went on, still louder, as she caught up her knitting from the table, "but she'll ne'er knit the lads' stockin's, nor foot 'em nayther, while I live; an' when I'm gone, he'll be-think him as nobody 'ull ne'er fit's leg and foot as his old mother did. She'll know nothin' o' narrowin' an' heeling', I warrand, an' she'll make a long toe as he canna get's boot on. That's what comes o' marr'in' young wenches. I war gone thirty, an' th' feyther too, afore we war married, an' young enough too. She'll be a poor dratchell by then *she's* thirty, a'marr'in' a-that'n, afore her teeth's all come."

Adam walked so fast that he was at the yard gate before seven. Martin Poyser and the grandfather were not yet come in from the meadow; every one was in the meadow, even to the black-and-tan terrier; no one kept watch in the yard but the bull-dog; and when Adam reached the house door, which stood wide open, he saw there was no one in the bright clean house-place. But he guessed where Mrs. Poyser and some one else would be quite within hearing; so he knocked on the door and said, with his strong voice, "Mrs. Poyser within?"

"Come in, Mr. Bede, come in," Mrs. Poyser cailed out from the dairy. She always gave Adam this title when she received him in her own house. "You may come into the dairy if you will, for I canna justly leave the cheese."

Adam walked into the dairy, where Mrs. Poyser and Nancy were crushing the first evening cheese.

"Why, you might think you war come to a dead house," said Mrs. Poyser, as he stood in the open doorway; "they're all i' the meadow; but Martin's sure to be in afore long, for they're leaving the hay cocked to-night, ready for carrying first thing to-morrow. I've been forced to have Nancy in, upo' 'count as Hetty must gather the red currants to-night;

the fruit allays ripens so contrary, just when ivery hand's wanted. An' there's no trustin' the children to gether it, for they put more into their own mouths nor into the basket; you might as well set the wasps to gether the fruit."

Adam longed to say he would go into the garden till Mr. Poyser came in, but he was not quite courageous enough, so he said, "I could be looking at your spinning-wheel, then, and see what wants doing to it. Perhaps it stands in the house, where I can find it?"

"No, I've put it away in the right hand parlor; but let it be till I can fetch it an' show it you. I'd be glad now if you'd go into the garden, and tell Hetty to send Totty in. The child 'ull run if she's told, and I know Hetty's lettin' her eat too many currans. I'll be much obliged to you, Mr. Bede, if you'll go an' send her in; and there's the York an' Lankester roses beautiful in the garden now—you'll like to see 'em. But you'd like a drink o' whey first, p'r'aps; I know you're fond o' whey, as most folks is when they hanna got to crush it out."

"Thank you, Mrs. Poyser," said Adam; "a drink o' whey's allays a treat to me. I'd rather have it than beer any day."

"Ay, ay," said Mrs. Poyser, reaching a small white basin that stood on the shelf, and dipping it into the whey-tub, "the smell o' bread's sweet t'every body but the baker. The Miss Irwines allays say, 'Oh, Mrs. Poyser, I envy you your dairy; and I envy you your chickens; and what a beautiful thing a farm-house is, to be sure!' An' I say, 'Yis; a farm-house is a fine thing for them as look on, an' don't know the liftin', an' the stannin', an' the worritin' o' the inside as belongs to't.'"

"Why, Mrs. Poyser, you wouldn't like to live any place else but in a farm-house, so well as you manage it," said Adam, taking the basin; "and there can be nothing to look at pleasanter nor a fine milch cow, standing up to its knees in pasture, and the new milk frothing in the pail, and the fresh butter ready for market, and the calves and the poultry. Here's to your health, and may you allers have strength to look after your own dairy, and set a pattern t' all the farmers' wives in the country."

Mrs. Poyser was not to be caught in the weakness of smiling at a compliment, but a quiet complacency overspread her face like a stealing sunbeam, and gave a milder glance than usual to her blue-gray eyes, as she looked at Adam

drinking the whey. Ah! I think I taste that whey now—with a flavor so delicate that one can hardly distinguish it from an odor, and with that soft gliding warmth that fills one's imagination with a still happy dreaminess. And the light music of the dropping whey is in my ears, mingling with the twittering of a bird outside the wire net-work window—the window overlooking the garden, and shaded by tall gueldre roses.

"Have a little more, Mr. Bede?" said Mrs. Poyser, as Adam set down the basin.

"No, thank you; I'll go into the garden now, and send in the little lass."

"Ay, do; and tell her to come to her mother in the dairy."

Adam walked round by the rick-yard, at present empty of ricks, to the little wooden gate leading into the garden—once the well-tended kitchen-garden of a manor-house; now, but for the handsome brick wall with stone coping that ran along one side of it, a true farm-house garden, with hardy perennial flowers, unpruned fruit-trees, and kitchen vegetables growing together in careless, half-neglected abundance. In that leafy, flowery, bushy time, to look for any one in this garden was like playing at "hide and seek." There was the tall holly-hocks beginning to flower, and dazzle the eye with their pink, white, and yellow; there were the syringas and gueldre roses, all large and disorderly for want of trimming; there were leafy walls of scarlet beans and late peas; there was a row of bushy filberts in one direction, and in another a huge apple-tree making a barren circle under its low-spreading boughs. But what signified a barren patch or two? The garden was so large. There was always a superfluity of broad beans—it took nine to ten of Adam's strides to get to the end of the uncut grass walk that ran by the side of them; and as for other vegetables, there was so much more room than was necessary for them, that in the rotation of crops a large flourishing bed of groundsel was of yearly occurrence on one spot or other. The very rose-trees, at which Adam stopped to pluck one, looked as if they grew wild; they were all huddled together in bushy masses, now flaunting with wide open petals, almost all of them of the streaked pink and white kind, which doubtless dated from the union of the houses of York and Lancaster. Adam was wise enough to choose a compact Provence rose that peeped out half-smothered by its flaunting, scentless neighbors, and held it in his hand—he thought he should be more at ease holding

something in his hand—as he walked on to the far end of the garden, where he remembered there was the largest row of current-trees, not far off from the great yew-tree arbor.

But he had not gone many steps beyond the roses, when he heard the shaking of a bough, and a boy's voice, saying,

“Now, then, Totty, hold out your pinny—there's a duck.”

The voice came from the boughs of a tall cherry-tree, where Adam had no difficulty in discerning a small, blue-pinafores figure perched in a commodious position where the fruit was thickest. Doubtless Totty was below, behind the screen of peas. Yes—with her bonnet hanging down her back, and her fat face, dreadfully smeared with red juice, turned up toward the cherry-tree, while she held her little round hole of a mouth and her red-stained pinafore to receive the promised downfall. I am sorry to say, more than half the cherries that fell were hard and yellow instead of juicy and red; but Totty spent no time in useless regrets, and she was already sucking the third juiciest when Adam said, “There now, Totty, you've got your cherries. Run in the house with 'em to mother—she wants you—she's in the dairy. Run in this minute—there's a good little girl.”

He lifted her up in his strong arms and kissed her as he spoke, a ceremony which Totty regarded as a tiresome interruption to cherry-eating; and when he set her down she trotted off quite silently toward the house, sucking her cherries as she went along.

“Tommy, my lad, take care you're not shot for a little thieving bird,” said Adam, as he walked on toward the currant-trees.

He could see there was a large basket at the end of the row; Hetty would not be far off, and Adam already felt as if she were looking at him. Yet when he turned the corner she was standing with her back toward him, and stooping to gather the low-hanging fruit. Strange that she had not heard him coming! perhaps it was because she was making the leaves rustle. She started when she became conscious that some one was near—started so violently that she dropped the basin with the currants in it, and then when she saw that it was Adam, she turned from pale to red. That blush made his heart beat with a new happiness. Hetty had never blushed at seeing him before.

“I frightened you,” he said, with a delicious sense that it didn't signify what he said, since Hetty seemed to feel as much as he did; “let *me* pick the currants up.”

That was soon done, for they had only fallen in a tangled mass on the grass-plot, and Adam, as he rose and gave her the basin again, looked straight into her eyes with the subdued tenderness that belongs to the first moments of hopeful love.

Hetty did not turn away her eyes ; her blush had subsided, and she met his glance with a quiet sadness, which contented Adam because it was so unlike anything he had seen in her before.

"There's not many more currants to get," she said ; "I shall soon ha' done now."

"I'll help you," said Adam, and he fetched the large basket, which was nearly full of currants, and set it close to them.

Not a word more was spoken as they gathered the currants. Adam's heart was too full to speak, and he thought Hetty knew all that was in it. She was not indifferent to his presence after all ; she had blushed when she saw him, and then there was that touch of sadness about her which must surely mean love, since it was the opposite of her usual manner, which had often impressed him as indifference. And he could glance at her continually as she bent over the fruit, while the level evening sunbeams stole through the thick apple-tree boughs and rested on her round cheek and neck as if they two were in love with her. It was to Adam the time that a man can least forget in after-life—the time when he believes that the first woman he has ever loved betrays by a slight something, a word, a tone, a glance, the quivering of a lip or an eyelid, that she is at least beginning to love him in return. The sign is so slight it is scarcely perceptible to the ear or eye—he could describe it to no one—it is a mere feather-touch, yet it seems to have changed his whole being, to have merged an uneasy yearning into a delicious unconsciousness of everything but the present moment. So much of our early gladness vanishes utterly from our memory : we can never recall the joy with which we laid our heads on our mother's bosom or rode on our father's back in childhood ; doubtless that joy is wrought up into our nature, or as the sunlight of long-past mornings is wrought up into the soft mellowness of the apricot ; but it is gone forever from our imagination, and we can only *believe* in the joys of childhood. But the first glad moments in our first love is a vision which returns to us to the last, and brings with it a thrill of feeling intense and special as the recurrent sensation of a sweet odor breathed

in a far-off hour of happiness. It is a memory that gives a more exquisite touch to tenderness, that feeds the madness of jealousy, and adds the last keenness to the agony of despair.

Hetty bending over the red bushes, the level rays piercing the screen of apple-tree boughs, the length of bushy garden beyond, his own emotions as he looked at her and believed that she was thinking of him, and that there was no need for them to talk—Adam remembered it all to the last moment of his life.

And Hetty? You know quite well that Adam was mistaken about her. Like many another man, he thought the signs of love for another were signs of love toward himself. When Adam was approaching unseen by her, she was absorbed as usual in thinking and wondering about Arthur's possible return; the sound of any man's footstep would have affected her just in the same way—she would have *felt* it might be Arthur before she had time to see, and the blood that forsook her cheek in the agitation of that momentary feeling would have rushed back again at the sight of any one else just as much as at the sight of Adam. He was not wrong in thinking that a change had come over Hetty; the anxieties and fears of a first passion, with which she was trembling, had become stronger than vanity, had given her for the first time that sense of helpless dependence on another's feelings which awakens the clinging deprecating womanhood even in the shallowest girl that can ever experience it, and creates in her a sensibility to kindness which found her quite hard before. For the first time Hetty felt there was something soothing to her in Adam's timid yet manly tenderness; she wanted to be treated lovingly—Oh, it was very hard to bear this blank of absence, silence, apparent indifference, after those moments of glowing love! She was not afraid that Adam would tease her with love-making and flattering speeches like her other admirers; he had always been so reserved to her; she could enjoy without any fear the sense that this strong brave man loved her, and was near her. It never entered into her mind that Adam was pitiable too—that Adam, too, must suffer one day.

Hetty, we know, was not the first woman that had behaved more gently to the man who loved her in vain, because she had herself begun to love another. It was a very old story; but Adam knew nothing about it, so he drank in the sweet delusion.

"That'll do," said Hetty, after a little while. "Aunt wants me to leave some on the trees. I'll take 'em in now."

"It's very well I came to carry the basket," said Adam, "for it 'ud ha' been too heavy for your little arms."

"No: I could ha' carried it with both hands."

"Oh, I dare say," said Adam smiling, "and been as long getting into the house as a little ant carrying a caterpillar. Have you ever seen those tiny fellows carrying things four times as big as themselves?"

"No," said Hetty indifferently, not caring to know the difficulties of ant-life.

"Oh, I used to watch 'em often when I was a lad. But now, you see, I can carry the basket with one arm, as if it was an empty nutshell, and give you th' other arm to lean on. Won't you? Such big arms as mine were made for little arms like yours to lean on."

Hetty smiled faintly, and put her arm within his. Adam looked down at her, but her eyes were turned dreamily toward another corner of the garden.

"Have you ever been to Eagledale?" she said, as they walked slowly along.

"Yes," said Adam, pleased to have her ask a question about himself; "ten years ago, when I was a lad, I went with father to see about some work there. It's a wonderful sight—rocks and caves such as you never saw in your life. I never had a right notion o' rocks till I went there."

"How long did it take to get there?"

"Why, it took us the best part o' two days' walking; but it's nothing of a day's journey for anybody as has got a first-rate nag. The captain 'ud get there in nine or ten hours, I'll be bound, he's such a rider. And I shouldn't wonder if he's back again to-morrow; he's too active to rest long in that lonely place, all by himself, for there's nothing but a bit of a inn i' that part where he's gone to fish. I wish he'd got th' estate in his hands; that 'ud be the right thing for him, for it 'ud give him plenty to do, and he'd do't well too, for all he's so young; he's got better notions o' things that many a man twice his age. He spoke very handsome to me th' other day about lending me money to set up i' business; and, if things come round that way; I'd rather be beholding to him nor to any man i' the world."

Poor Adam was led on to speak about Arthur because he thought Hetty would be pleased to know that the young squire was so ready to befriend him; the fact entered into his future

prospects, which he would like to seem promising in her eyes. And it was true that Hetty listened with an interest which brought a new light into her eyes and a half smile upon her lips.

"How pretty the roses are now!" Adam continued, pausing to look at them. "See! I stole the prettiest, but I didna mean to keep it myself. I think as these are all pink, and have got a finer sort o' green leaves, are prettier than the striped 'uns, don't you?"

He set down the basket, and took the rose from his button-hole.

"It smells very sweet," he said; "those striped 'uns have no smell. Stick it in your frock, and then you can put it in water after. It 'ud be a pity to let it fade."

Hetty took the rose, smiling as she did so at the pleasant thought that Arthur could so soon get back if he liked. There was a flash of hope and happiness in her mind, and, with a sudden impulse of gayety, she did what she had very often done before—stuck the rose in her hair a little above the left ear. The tender admiration in Adam's face was slightly shadowed by reluctant disapproval. Hetty's love of finery was just the thing that would most provoke his mother, and he himself disliked it as much as it was possible for him to dislike anything that belonged to her.

"Ah!" he said, "that's like the ladies in the pictures at the Chase; they've mostly got flowers, or gold things i' their hair, but somehow I don't like to see 'em; they allays put me i' mind o' the painted woman outside the shows at Tred-dles'on fair. What can a woman have to set her off better than her own hair, when it curls so, like yours? If a woman's young and pretty, I think you can see her good looks all the better for her being plain dressed. Why, Dinah Morris looks very nice, for all she wears such a plain cap and gown. It seems to me as a woman's face doesna want flowers; it's almost like a flower itself. I'm sure yours is."

"Oh, very well," said Hetty, with a little playful pout, taking the rose out of her hair. "I'll put one o' Dinah's caps on when we go in, and you'll see if I look better in it. She left one behind, so I can take the pattern."

"Nay, nay, I don't want you to wear a Methodist cap like Dinah's. I dare say it's a very ugly cap, and I used to think when I saw her here, as it was nonsense for her to dress different t' other people; but I never rightly noticed her till she came to see mother last week, and then I thought the cap

seemed to fit her face somehow as th' acorn-cup fits th' acorn, and I shouldn't like to see her so well without it, But you've got another sort o' face; I'd have you just as you are now, without anything t' interfere with your own looks. It's like when a man's singing a good tune, you don't want t' hear bells tinkling and interfering wi' the sound."

He took her arm and put it within his again, looking down on her fondly, He was afraid she should think he had lectured her, imagining, as we are apt to do, that she had perceived all the thoughts he had only half expressed. And the thing he dreaded most was lest any cloud should come over this evening's happiness. For the world he would not have spoken of his love to Hetty yet, till this commencing kindness towards him should have grown into unmistakable love. In his imagination he saw long years of his future life stretching before him, blessed with the right to call Hetty his own; he could be content with very little at present. So he took up the basket of currants once more, and they went on toward the house.

The scene had quite changed in the half hour that Adam had been in the garden. The yard was full of life now; Marty was letting the screaming geese through the gate, and wickedly provoking the gander by hissing at him; the granary door was groaning on its hinges, as Alick shut it, after dealing out the corn; the horses were being let out to watering, amid much barking of all the three dogs, and many "whups" from Tim the ploughman, as if the heavy animals who held down their meek, intelligent heads, and lifted their shaggy feet so deliberately, were likely to rush wildly in every direction but the right. Everybody was come back from the meadow; and when Hetty and Adam entered the house-place, Mr. Poyser was seated in the three-cornered chair, and the grandfather in the large arm-chair opposite, looking on with pleasant expectation while the supper was being laid on the oak table. Mrs. Poyser had laid the cloth herself—a cloth made of homespun linen, with a shining checkered pattern on it, and of an agreeable whity-brown hue, such as all sensible housewives liked to see—none of your bleached "shop-rag" that would wear into holes in no time, but good homespun that would last for two generations. The cold veal, the fresh lettuces, and the stuffed chine, might well look tempting to hungry men who had dined at half-past twelve o'clock. On the large deal table against the wall there were bright pewter plates and spoons and cans, ready for Alick and his companions; for the master

and servants ate their supper not far off each other, which was all the pleasanter, because if a remark about to-morrow morning's work occurred to Mr. Poyser, Alick was at hand to hear it.

"Well, Adam, I'm glad to see ye," said Mr. Poyser. "What, ye've been helping Hetty to gether the currans, eh? Come, sit ye down, sit ye down. Why, it's pretty near a three-week since y' had your supper wi' us; and the missis has got one of her rare stuffed chins. I'm glad ye're come."

"Hetty," said Mrs. Poyser, as she looked into the basket of currants to see if the fruit was fine, "run up stairs, and send Molly down. She's putting Totty to bed, and I want her to draw th' ale, for Nancy's busy yet i' the dairy. You can see to the child. But whatever did you let her run away from you along wi' Tommy for, and stuff herself wi' fruit as sh. can't eat a bit o' good victual?"

This was said in a lower tone than usual, while her husband was talking to Adam; for Mrs. Poyser was strict in adherence to her own rules of propriety, and she considered that a young girl was not to be treated sharply in the presence of a respectable man who was courting her. That would not be fair play; every woman was young in her turn, and had her chances of matrimony, which it was a point of honor for other women not to spoil—just as one market-woman who has sold her own eggs must not try to balk another of a customer.

Hetty made haste to run away up stairs, not easily finding an answer to her aunt's question, and Mrs. Poyser went out to see after Marty and Tommy, and bring them in to supper.

Soon they were all seated—the two rosy lads, one on each side, by the pale mother, a place being left for Hetty between Adam and her uncle. Alick too was come in, and was seated in his far corner, eating cold broad beans out of a large dish with his pocket-knife, and finding a flavor in them which he would not have exchanged for the finest pine-apples.

What a time that gell is drawing th' ale, to be sure," said Mrs. Poyser, when she was dispensing her slices of stuffed chine. "I think she sets the jug under and forgets to turn the tap, as there's nothing you can't believe o' them wenches; they'll set th' empty kettle o' the fire, and then come an hour after to see if the water boils."

"She's drawin' for the men too," said Mr. Poyser. "Thee shouldst ha' told her to bring our jug up first."

"Told her?" said Mrs. Poyser; "yis, I might spend all the wind i' my body, an' take the bellows too, if I was to tell

them gells everything as their own sharpness wonna tell' em. Mr. Bede, will you take some vinegar with your lettuce? Ay, you re i' the right not. It spoils the flavor o' the chine, to my thinking. It's poor eating where the flavor o' the meat lies i' the cruets. There's folks as make bad butter, and trusten to the salt t' hide it."

Mrs. Poyser's attention was here diverted by the appearance of Molly, carrying a large jug, two small mugs, and four drinking-cans, all full of ale or small beer—an interesting example of the prehensile power possessed by the human hand. Poor Molly's mouth was rather wider open than usual, as she walked along with her eyes fixed on the double cluster of vessels in her hands, quite innocent of the expression in her mistress's eye.

"Molly, I niver knew your equils—to think o' your poor mother as is a widow, an' I took you wi' as good a no character, an' the times an' times I've told you"

Molly had not seen the lightning, and the thunder shook her nerves the more for the want of that preparation. With a vague, alarmed sense that she must somehow comport herself differently, she hastened her step a little toward the far deal-table, where she might set down her cans—caught her foot in her apron, which had become untied, and fell with a crash and a splash into a pool of beer; whereupon a tittering explosion from Marty and Tommy, and a serious "Ello!" from Mr. Poyser, who saw his draught of ale unpleasantly deferred.

"There you go!" resumed Mrs. Poyser, in a cutting tone, as she rose and went toward the cupboard, while Molly began dolefully to pick up the fragments of pottery. "It's what I told you 'ud come, over and over again; and there's your month's wage gone, an' more, to pay for that jug as I've had i' the house this ten year, and nothing ever happened to't before; but the crockery you've broke sin' here in th' house you've been 'ud make a parson swear—God forgi' me for saying so; an' if it had been boiling wort out o' the copper, it 'ud ha' been the same, and you'd ha' been scalded and very like lamed for life, as there's no knowing but what you will be some day, if you go on; for anybody 'ud think you'd got the St. Vitus's Dance, to see the things you've throwed down. It's a pity but what the bits was stacked up for you to see, though it's neither seeing nor hearing as 'ull make much odds to you—anybody 'ud think you war case-hardened."

Poor Molly's tears were dropping fast by this time, and in

her desperation at the lively movement of the beer-stream toward Alick's legs, she was converting her apron into a mop, while Mrs. Poyser, opening the cupboard, turned a blighting eye upon her.

"Ah!" she went on, "you'll do no good wi' crying an' making more wet to wipe up. It's all your own wilfulness, as I tell you, for there's nobody no call to break anything if they'll only go the right way to work. But wooden folks would need ha' wooden things t' handle. And here must I take the brown-and-white jug, as it's never been used three times this year, and go down i' the cellar myself, and belike catch my death, and be laid up with inflammation."

Mrs. Poyser had turned round from the cupboard with the brown-and-white jug in her hand, when she caught sight of something at the other end of the kitchen; perhaps it was because she was already trembling and nervous that the apparition had so strong an effect on her; perhaps jug-breaking, like other crimes, has a contagious influence. However it was, she stared and stared like a ghost-seer, and the precious brown-and-white jug fell to the ground, parting forever with its spout and handle.

"Did ever anybody see the like?" she said, with a suddenly lowered tone, after a moment's bewildered glance round the room. "The jugs are bewitched, *I* think. It's them nasty glazed handles—they slip o'er the finger like a snail."

"Why, thee'st let thy own whip fly i' thy face," said her husband, who had now joined in the laugh of the young ones.

"It's all very fine to look on and grin," rejoined Mrs. Poyser: "but there's times when the cockery seems alive, an' flies out o' your hand like a bird. It's like the glass, sometimes, 'ull crack as it stands. What is to be broke *will* be broke, for I never dropped a thing i' my life for want o' holding it, else I should never ha' kept the crockery all these 'ears as I bought at my own wedding. And, Hetty, are you mad? Whativer do you mean by coming down i' that way, and making one think as there's a ghost a-walking i' th' house?"

A new outbreak of laughter while Mrs. Poyser was speaking, was caused, less by her sudden conversion to a fatalistic view of jug-breaking, than by that strange appearance of Hetty which had started her aunt. The little minx had found a black gown of her aunt's and pinned it close round her neck to look like Dinah's, had made her hair as flat as she could, and had tied on one of Dinah's high-crowned, borderiess net-

caps. The thought of Dinah's pale grave face and mild gray eyes, which the sight of the gown and cap brought with it, made it a laughable surprise enough to see them replaced by Hetty's round rosy cheeks and coquettish dark eyes. The boys got off their chairs and jumped round her, clapping their hands, and even Alick gave a low ventral laugh as he looked up from his beans. Under cover of the noise, Mrs. Poyser went into the back kitchen to send Nancy into the cellar with the great pewter measure, which had some chance of being free from bewitchment.

"Why, Hetty, lass, are ye turned Methodis?" said Mr. Poyser, with that comfortable, slow enjoyment of a laugh which one only sees in stout people. "You must pull your face a deal longer before you'll do for one; mustna she, Adam? How come ye to put them things on, eh?"

"Adam said he liked Dinah's cap and gown better nor my clothes," said Hetty, sitting down demurely. "He says folks look better in ugly clothes."

"Nay, nay," said Adam, looking at her admiringly; "I only said they seemed to suit Dinah. But if I'd said you'd look pretty in 'em I should ha' said nothing but what was true."

"Why, thee thought'st Hetty war a ghost, didstna?" said Mr. Poyser to his wife, who now came back and took her seat again. "Thee look'dst as scared as scared."

"It little signifies how I looked," said Mrs. Poyser; "looks 'ull mend no jugs, nor laughing neither, as I see. Mr. Bede, I'm sorry you've to wait so long for your ale, but it's coming in a minute. Make yourself at home wi' the cold potatoes; I know you like 'em. Tommy, I'll send you to bed this minute, if you don't give over laughing. What is there to laugh at, I should like to know? I'd sooner cry nor laugh at the sight o' that poor thing's cap; and there's them as 'ud be better if they could make theirselves like her i' more ways nor putting on her cap. It little becomes anybody i' this house to make fun o' my sister's child, an her just gone away from us, as it went to my heart to part wi' her; an' I know one thing as if trouble was to come, an' I war to be lain up i' my bed, an' the children was to die—as there's no knowing but what they will—an' the murrain was to come among the cattle again, an' every thing went to rack an' ruin—I say, we might be glad to get sight o' Dinah's cap again, wi' her own face under it, border or no border. For she's one o' them things as looks the brightest on a rainy day, and loves you the best when you're most i' need on't."

Mrs. Poyser, you perceive, was aware that nothing would be so likely to expel the comic as the terrible.

Tommy, who was of a susceptible disposition, and very fond of his mother, and who had, besides, eaten so many cherries as to have his feelings less under command than usual, was so affected by the dreadful picture she had made of the possible future, that he began to cry; and the good-natured father, indulgent to all weaknesses but those of negligent farmers, said to Hetty,

"You'd better take the thinks off again, my lass; it hurts your aunt to see 'em."

Hetty went up stairs again, and the arrival of the ale made an agreeable diversion; for Adam had to give his opinion of the new tap, which could not be otherwise than complimentary to Mrs. Poyser; and then followed a discussion on the secrets of good brewing, the folly of stinginess in "hopping," and the doubtful economy of a farmer's making his own malt. Mrs. Poyser had so many opportunities of expressing herself with weight on these subjects, that by the time supper was ended, the ale jug refilled, and Mr. Poyser's pipe alight, she was once more in good humor, and ready, at Adam's request, to fetch the broken spinning-wheel for his inspection.

"Ah!" said Adam, looking at it carefully, "here's a nice bit o' turning wanted. It's a pretty wheel. I must have it up at the turning-shop in the village, and do it there, for I've no convenience for turning at home. If you'll send it to Mr. Burge's shop i' the morning, I'll get it done for you by Wednesday. I've been turning it over in my mind," he continued looking at Mr. Poyser, "to make a bit more convenience at home for nice jobs o' cabinet-making. I've always done a deal at such little things in odd hours, and they're profitable, for there's more workmanship nor material in 'em. I look for me and Seth to get a little business for ourselves i' that way, for I know a man at Rosseter as 'll take as many things as we should make, beside what we could get orders for round about."

Mr. Poyser entered with interest into a project which seemed a step toward Adam's becoming a "master-man;" and Mrs. Poyser gave her approbation to the scheme of the movable kitchen cupboard, which was to be capable of containing grocery, pickles, crockery, and house-linen, in the utmost compactness, without confusion. Hetty once more in her own dress, with neckerchief pushed a little backward on this warm

evening, was seated picking currants near the window, where Adam could see her quite well. And so the time passed pleasantly till Adam got up to go. He was pressed to come again soon, but not to stay longer, for at this busy time sensible people would not run the risk of being sleepy at five o'clock in the morning.

"I shall go a step farther," said Adam, "and go on to see Mester Massey, for he wasn't at church yesterday, and I've not seen him for a week past. I've never hardly known him to miss church before."

"Ay," said Mr. Poyser, "we've heard nothing about him, for it's the boys' hollodays now, so we can give you no account."

"But you'll never think o' going there at this hour o' th' night?" said Mrs. Poyser, folding up her knitting.

"Oh, Mester Massey sits up late," said Adam. "An' the night school's not over yet. Some o' the men don't come till late, they've got so far to walk. And Bartle himself's never in bed till it's gone eleven."

"I wouldna have him to live wi' me, then," said Mrs. Poyser, "a-dropping candle-grease about, as you're like to tumble down o' the floor the first thing i' the morning."

"Ay, eleven o'clock's late—it's late," said old Martin. "I ne'er sot up so i' *my* life, not to say as it warn a marr'in', or a christenin', or a wake, or th' harvest supper. Eleven o'clock's late."

"Why, I sit up till after twelve often," said Adam, laughing, "but it isn't t' eat and drink extry, it's to work extry. Good-night, Mrs. Poyser; good-night, Hetty."

Hetty could only smile and not shake hands, for hers were dyed and damp with currant-juice; but all the rest gave a hearty shake to the large palm that was held out to them, and said, "Come again, come again!"

"Ay, think o' that now," said Mr. Poyser, when Adam was out on the causeway. "Sitting up till past twelve to do extry work! Ye'll not find many men o' six-an'-twenty as 'ull do to put i' the shafts wi' him. If you can catch Adam for a husband, Hetty, you'll ride i' your own spring-cart some day, I'll be your warrant."

Hetty was moving across the kitchen with the currnats, so her uncle did not see the little toss of the head with which she answered him. To ride in a spring-cart seemed a very miserable lot indeed to her now.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE NIGHT-SCHOOL AND THE SCHOOLMASTER.

BARTLE MASSEY'S was one of a few scattered houses on the edge of a common, which was divided by the road to Tred-dioston. Adam reached it in a quarter of an hour after leaving the Hall Farm; and when he had his hand on the door latch, he could see, through the curtainless window, that there were eight or nine heads bending over the desks, lighted by thin dips.

When he entered, a reading lesson was going forward, and Bartle Massey merely nodded, leaving him to take his place where he pleased. He had not come for the sake of a lesson to-night, and his mind was too full of personal matters, too full of the last two hours he had passed in Hetty's presence, for him to amuse himself with a book till school was over; so he sat down in a corner, and looked on with an absent mind. It was a sort of scene which Adam had beheld almost weekly for years; he knew by heart every arabesque flourish in the framed specimen of Bartle Massey's handwriting which hung over the schoolmaster's head, by way of keeping a lofty ideal before the minds of his pupils; he knew the backs of all the books on the shelf running along the whitewashed wall above the pegs for the slates; he knew exactly how many grains were gone out of the ear of Indian-corn that hung from one of the rafters; he had long ago exhausted the resources of his imagination in trying to think how the bunch of feathery seaweed had looked and grown in its native element; and from the place where he sat he could make nothing of the old map of England that hung against the opposite wall, for age had turned it of a fine yellow-brown, something like that of a well-seasoned meerschaum. The drama that was going on was almost as familiar as the scene, nevertheless habit had not made him indifferent to it, and even in his present self-absorbed mood, Adam felt a momentary stirring of the old fellow-feeling, as he looked at the rough men painfully holding pen or pencil with their cramped hands, or humbly laboring through their reading lesson.

The reading class now seated on the form in front of the schoolmaster's desk, consisted of the three most backward pupils. Adam would have known it, only by seeing Bartle

Massey's face as he looked over his spectacles, which he had shifted to the ridge of his nose, not requiring them for present purposes. The face wore its mildest expression ; the grizzled bushy eyebrows had taken their more acute angle of compassionate kindness, and the mouth, habitually compressed with a pout of the lower lip, was relaxed so as to be able to speak a hopeful word or syllable in a moment. This gentle expression was the more interesting because the schoolmaster's nose, an irregular aquiline twisted a little on one side, had rather a formidable character ; and his brow, moreover, had that peculiar tension which always impresses one as a sign of a keen impatient temperament ; the blue veins stood out like cords under the transparent yellow skin, and this intimidating brow was softened by no tendency to baldness, for the gray bristly hair, cut down to about an inch in length, stood round it in as close ranks as ever.

"Nay, Bill, nay," Bartle was saying, in a kind tone, as he nodded to Adam, "begin that again, and then perhaps it'll come to you what d, r, y, spells. It's the same lesson you read last week, you know."

"Bill" was a sturdy fellow, aged four-and-twenty, an excellent stone-sawyer, who could get as good wages as any man in the trade of his years ; but he found a reading lesson in words of one syllable a harder matter to deal with than the hardest stone he had ever had to saw. The letters, he complained, were so "uncommon alike, there was no tellin' 'em one from another," the sawyer's business not being concerned with minute differences such as exist between a letter with its tail turned up and a letter with its tail turned down. But Bill had a firm determination that he would learn to read, founded chiefly on two reasons : first, that Tom Hazelow, his cousin, could read anything "right off," whether it was print or writing, and Tom had sent him a letter from twenty miles off, saying how he was prospering in the world, and had got an overlooker's place ; secondly, that Sam Phillips, who sawed with him, had learned to read when he was turned twenty ; and what could be done by a little fellow like Sam Phillips, Bill considered, could be done by himself, seeing that he could pound Sam into wet clay if circumstances required it. So here he was, pointing his big finger toward three words at once, and turning his head on one side that he might keep better hold with his eye of the one word which was to be discriminated out of the group. The amount of knowledge Bartle Massey must possess was something so dim and vast that

Bill's imagination recoiled before it ; he would hardly have ventured to deny that the schoolmaster might have something to do in bringing about the regular return of daylight and the changes in the weather.

The man seated next to Bill was of a very different type : he was a Methodist brickmaker, who, after spending thirty years of his life in perfect satisfaction with his ignorance, had lately "got religion," and along with it the desire to read the Bible. But with him, too, learning was a heavy business, and on his way out to-night he had offered as usual a special prayer for help, seeing that he had undertaken this hard task with a single eye to the nourishment of his soul—that he might have a greater abundance of texts and hymns wherewith to banish evil memories and the temptations of old habits ; or, in brief language, the devil. For the brickmaker had been a notorious poacher, and was suspected, though there was no good evidence against him, of being the man who had shot a neighboring gamekeeper in the leg. However that might be, it is certain that shortly after the accident referred to, which was coincident with the arrival of an awakening Methodist preacher at Treddleston, a great change had been observed in the brickmaker ; and though he was still known in the neighborhood by his old sobriquet of "Brimstone," there was nothing he held in so much horror as any farther transactions with that evil-smelling element. He was a broad-chested fellow with a fervid temperament, which helped him better in imbibing religious ideas than in the dry process of acquiring the mere human knowledge of the alphabet. Indeed, he had been already a little shaken in his resolution by a brother Methodist, who assured him that the letter was a mere obstruction to the Spirit, and expressed a fear that Brimstone was too eager for the knowledge that puffeth up.

The third beginner was a much more promising pupil. He was a tall but thin and wiry man, nearly as old as Brimstone, with a very pale face, and hands stained a deep blue. He was a dyer, who, in the course of dipping home-spun wool and old women's petticoats, had got fired with the ambition to learn a great deal more about the strange secrets of color. He had already a high reputation in the district for his dyes, and he was bent on discovering some method by which he could reduce the expense of crimsons and scarlets. The druggist at Treddleston had given him a notion that he might save himself a great deal of labor and expense if he could learn to read, and so he had begun to give his spare hours to the night-

school, resolving that his "little chap" should lose no time in coming to Mr. Massey's day-school as soon as he was old enough.

It was touching to see these three big men, with the marks of their hard labor about them, anxiously bending over the worn books, and painfully making out, "The grass is green," "The sticks are dry," "The corn is ripe"—a very hard lesson to pass to after columns of single words all alike except in the first letter. It was almost as if three rough animals were making humble efforts to learn how they might become human. And it touched the tenderest fibre in Bartle Massey's nature, for such full-grown children as these were the only pupils for whom he had no severe epithets, and no impatient tones. He was not gifted with an imperturbable temper, and on music-nights it was apparent that patience could never be an easy virtue to him; but this evening, as he glances over his spectacles at Bill Downes, the sawyer, who is turning his head on one side with a desperate sense of blankness before the letters d, r, y, his eyes shed their mildest and most encouraging light.

After the reading class, two youths, between sixteen and nineteen, came up with imaginary bills of parcels, which they had been writing out on their slates, and were now required to calculate "off-hand"—a test which they stood with such imperfect success, that Bartle Massey, whose eyes had been glaring at them ominously through his spectacles for some minutes, at length burst out in a bitter, high-pitched tone, pausing between every sentence to rap the floor with a knobbed stick which rested between his legs.

"Now, you see, you don't do this thing a bit better than you did a fortnight ago; and I'll tell you what's the reason. You want to learn accounts; that's well and good. But you think all you need do to learn accounts is to come to me and do sums for an hour or so, two or three times a week; and no sooner do you get your caps on and turn out of doors again, than you sweep the whole thing clean out of your mind. You go whistling about, and take no more care what you're thinking of than if your heads were gutters for any rubbish to swill through that happened to be in the way; and if you get a good notion in 'em, it's pretty soon washed out again. You think knowledge is to be got cheap—you'll come and pay Bartle Massey sixpence a week, and he'll make you clever at figures without your taking any trouble. But knowledge isn't to be got with paying sixpence, let me tell you; if

you're to know figures, you must turn 'em over in your own heads, and keep your thoughts fixed on 'em. There's nothing you can't turn into a sum, for there's nothing but what's got number in it—even a fool. You may say to yourselves, 'I'm one fool and Jack's another; if my fool's head weighed four pound, and Jack's three pound three ounces and three quarters, how many pennyweights heavier would my head be than Jack's?' A man that has got his heart in learning figures would make sums for himself, and work 'em in his head; when he sat at his shoemaking, he'd count his stiches by fives, and then put a price on his stitches, say half a farthing, and then see how much money he could get in an hour; and then ask himself how much money he'd get in a day at that rate; and then how much ten workmen would get working three, or twenty, or a hundred years at that rate—and all the while his needle would be going just as fast as if he left his head empty for the devil to dance in. But the long and the short of it is—I'll have nobody in my night-school that doesn't strive to learn what he comes to learn, as hard as if he was striving to get out of a dark hole into broad daylight. I'll send no man away because he is stupid; if Billy Taft, the idiot, wanted to learn anything, I'd not refuse to teach him. But I'll not throw away good knowledge on people who think they can get it by the sixpenn'orth, and carry it away with them as they would an ounce of snuff. So never come to me again, if you can't show that you have been working with your own heads, instead of thinking you can pay for mine to work for you. That's the last word I've got to say to you."

With this final sentence, Bartle Massey gave a sharper rap than ever with his knobbed stick, and the discomfited lads got up to go with a sulky look. The other pupils had happily only their writing-books to show, in various stages of progress from pot-hooks to round text; and mere pen-strokes, however perverse, were less exasperating to Bartle than false arithmetic. He was a little more severe than usual on Jacob Storey's Z's, of which poor Jacob had written a page full, all with their tops turned the wrong way, with a puzzled sense that they were not right "somehow." But he observed in apology, that it was a letter you never wanted hardly, and he thought it had only been put there "to finish off th' alphabet, like, though ampusand (&) would ha' done as well, for what he could see."

At last the pupils had all taken their hats and said their

"Good-nights," and Adam, knowing his old master's habits, rose and said, "Shall I put the candles out, Mr. Massey?"

"Yes, my boy, yes, all but this, which I'll just carry into the house; and just lock the outer door, now you're near it," said Bartle, getting his stick in the fitting angle to help him in descending from his stool. He was no sooner on the ground than it became obvious why the stick was necessary—the left leg was much shorter than the right. But the schoolmaster was so active with his lameness that it was hardly thought of as a misfortune; and if you had seen him make his way along the school-room floor, and up the step into his kitchen you would perhaps have understood why the naughty boys sometimes felt that his pace might be indefinitely quickened, and that he and his stick might overtake them even in their swiftest run.

The moment he appeared at the kitchen door with the candle in his hand, a faint whimpering began in the chimney-corner, and a brown-and-tan-colored bitch, of that wise-looking breed, with short legs and long body, known to an unmechanical generation as turn-spits, came creeping along the floor, wagging her tail, and hesitating at every other step, as if her affections were painfully divided between the hamper in the chimney-corner and the master, whom she could not leave without a greeting.

"Well, Vixen, well then, how are the babbies?" said the schoolmaster, making haste toward the chimney-corner, and holding the candle over the low hamper, where two extremely blind puppies lifted up their heads toward the light, from a nest of flannel and wool. Vixen could not even see her master look at them without painful excitement; she got into the hamper and got out again the next moment, and behaved with true feminine folly, though looking all the while as wise as a dwarf with a large and old-fashioned head and body on the most abbreviated legs.

"Why, you've got a family, I see, Mr. Massey?" said Adam, smiling as he came into the kitchen. "How's that! I thought it was against the law here."

"Law? What's the use o' law when a man's once such a fool as to let a woman into his house?" said Bartle, turning away from the hamper with some bitterness. He always called Vixen a woman, and seemed to have lost all consciousness that he was using a figure of speech. "If I'd known Vixen was a woman, I'd never have held the boys from drowning her; but when I'd got her into my hand, I was forced to

take to her. And now you see what she's brought me to—the sly, hypocritical wench”—Bartle spoke these last words in a rasping tone of reproach, and looked at Vixen, who poked down her head and turned up her eyes toward him with a keen sense of the opprobrium—“and contrived to be brought to bed on a Sunday at church-time. I've wished again and again I'd been a bloody-minded man, that I could have strangled the mother and the brats with one cord.”

“I'm glad it was no worse a cause kept you from church,” said Adam. “I was afraid you must be ill for the first time i' your life. And I was particularly sorry not to have you at church yesterday.”

“Ah! my boy, I know why, I know why,” said Bartle, kindly, going up to Adam, and raising his hand up to the shoulder that was almost on a level with his own head. “You've had rough bit o' road to get over since I saw you—a rough bit o' road. But I'm in hopes there are better times coming for you. I've got some news to tell you. But I must get my supper first, for I'm hungry, I'm hungry. Sit down, sit down.”

Bartle went into his little pantry, and brought out an excellent home-baked loaf; for it was his one extravagance in these dear times to eat bread once a day instead of oat-cake; and he justified it by observing that what a schoolmaster wanted was brains, and oat-cake ran too much to bone instead of brains. Then came a piece of cheese and a quart jug with a crown of foam upon it. He placed them all on the round deal table which stood against his large arm-chair in the chimney-corner, with Vixen's hamper on one side of it, and a window-shelf with a few books piled up in it on the other. The table was as clean as if Vixen had been an excellent housewife in a checkered apron; so was the quarry floor; and the old carved oaken press, table, and chairs, which in these days would be bought at a high price in aristocratic houses, though, in that period of spider-legs and inlaid cupids, Bartle had got them for an old song, were as free from dust as things could be at the end of a summer's day.

“Now then, my boy, draw up, draw up. We'll not talk about business till we've had our supper. No man can be wise on an empty stomach. But,” said Bartle, rising from his chair again, “I must give Vixen her supper too, confound her! though she'll do nothing with it but nourish those unnecessary babbies. That's the way with these women—they've got no

headpieces to nourish, and so their food all runs either to fat or to brats."

He brought out of the pantry a dish of scraps, which Vixen at once fixed her eyes on, and jumped out of her hamper to lick up with the utmost dispatch.

"I've had my supper, Mr. Massey," said Adam, "so I'll look on while you eat yours. I've been at the Hall Farm, and they always have their supper betimes, you know; they don't keep your late hours."

"I know little about their hours," said Bartle, dryly, cutting his bread and not shrinking from the crust. "It's a house I seldom go into, though I'm fond of the boys, and Martin Poyser's a good fellow. There's too many women in the house for me; I hate the sound of women's voices; they're always either a-buzz or a-squeak. Mrs. Poyser keeps at the top o' the talk, like a fife; and as for the young lasses, I'd as soon look at water-grubs—I know what they'll turn to—stinging gnats, stinging gnats. Here, take some ale, my boy; it's been drawn for you, it's been drawn for you."

"Nay, Mr. Massey," said Adam, who took his old friend's whim more seriously than usual to-night, "don't be so hard on the creaturs God has made to be companions for us. A working man 'ud be badly off without a wife to see to th' house and the victual, and make things clean and comfortable."

"Nonsense! It's the silliest lie a sensible man like you ever believed, to say a woman makes a house comfortable. It's a story got up, because the women are there, and something must be found for 'em to do. I tell you there isn't a thing under the sun that needs to be done at all but what a man can do better than a woman, unless it's bearing children, and they do that in a poor make-shift way; it had better ha' been left to the men—it had better ha' been left to the men. I tell you a woman 'ull bake you a pie every week of her life, and never come to see that the hotter th' oven the shorter the time. I tell you a woman 'ull make your porridge every day for twenty years, and never think of measuring the proportion between the meal and the milk—a little more or less, she'll think, doesn't signify; the porridge *will* be awk'ard now and then; if it's wrong, it's summat in the milk, or it's summat in the water. Look at me! I make my own bread, and there's no difference between one batch and another from year's end to year's end; but if I'd got any other woman besides Vixen in the house, I must pray to the Lord every baking to give me

patience if the bread turned out heavy. And as for cleanliness, my house is cleaner than any other house on the Common, though the half of 'em swarm with women. Will Baker's lad comes to help me in a morning, and we get as much cleaning done in one hour without any fuss as a woman 'ud get done in three, and all the while be sending buckets o' water after your ankles, and let the fender and the fire-irons stand in the middle o' the floor half the day for you to break your shins against 'em. Don't tell me about God having made such creatures to be companions for us! I don't say but he might make Eve to be a companion to Adam in Paradise; there was no cooking to be spoiled there, and no other woman to cackle with and make mischief, though you see what mischief she did as soon as she'd an opportunity. But it's an impious unscriptural opinion to say a woman's a blessing to a man now; you might as well say adders, and wasps, and hogs, and wild beasts are a blessing, when they're only the evils that belong to this state o' probation, which it's lawful for a man to keep as clear of as he can in this life, hoping to get quit of 'em forever in another—hoping to get quit of 'em forever in another."

Bartle had become so excited and angry in the course of his invective that he had forgotten his supper, and only used the knife for the purpose of rapping the table with the haft. But towards the close the raps became so sharp and frequent, and his voice so quarrelsome, that Vixen felt incumbent on her to jump out of the hamper and bark vaguely.

"Quiet, Vixen!" snarled Bartle, turning round upon her. "You're like the rest o' the women—always putting in *your* word before you know why."

Vixen returned to her hamper again in humiliation, and her master continued his supper in a silence which Adam did not choose to interrupt; he knew the old man would be in a better humor when he had had his supper and lighted his pipe. Adam was used to hear him talk in this way, but had never learned so much of Bartle's past life as to know whether his view of married comfort was founded on experience. On that point Bartle was mute; and it was even a secret where he had lived previous to the twenty years in which, happily for the peasants and artisans of this neighborhood, he had been settled among them as their old schoolmaster. If anything like a question was ventured on this subject, Bartle replied, "Oh, I've seen many places—I've been a deal in the south," and the Loamshire men would as soon have thought

of asking for a particular town or village in Africa as in "the south."

"Now then, my boy," said Bartle at last, when he had poured out his second mug of ale and lighted his pipe—"now then, we'll have a little talk. But tell me first, have you heard any particular news to-day?"

"No," said Adam, "not as I remember."

"Ah! they'll keep it close, they'll keep it close, I dare say. But I found it out by chance; and it's news that may concern you, Adam, else I'm a man that don't know a superficial square foot from a solid."

Here Bartle gave a series of fierce and rapid puffs, looking earnestly the while at Adam. Your impatient loquacious man has never any notion of keeping his pipe alight by gentle measured puffs; he is always letting it go nearly out, and then punishing it for that negligence. At last he said,

"Satchell's got a paralytic stroke. I found it out from the lad they sent to Treddleston for the doctor, before seven o'clock this morning. He's a good way beyond sixty, you know; it's much if he gets over it."

"Well," said Adam, "I dare say there'd be more rejoicing than sorrow in the parish at his being laid up. He's been a selfish, tale-bearing, mischievous fellow; but, after all, there's nobody he's done so much harm to as to th' old Squire. Though it's the Squire himself as is to blame—making a stupid fellow like that a sort o' man-of-all-work, just to save th' expense of having a proper steward to look after th' estate. And he's lost more by ill-management o' the woods, I'll be bound, than 'ud pay for two stewards. If he's laid on the shelf it's to be hoped he'll make way for a better man; but I don't see how it's to make any difference to me."

"But I see it, but I see it," said Bartle, "and others besides me. The Captain's coming of age now—you know that as well as I do—and it's to be expected he'll have a little more voice in things. And I know, and you know too, what 'ud be the Captain's wish about the woods, if there was a fair opportunity for making a change. He's said in plenty of people's hearing that he'd make you manager of the woods to-morrow if he'd the power. Why, Carrol, Mr. Irwine's butler, heard him say so to the parson not many days ago. Carrol looked in when we were smoking our pipes o' Saturday night at Casson's, and he told us about it; and whenever anybody says a good word for you, the parson's ready to back it, that I'll answer for. It was pretty well talked over, I can tell you;

at Casson's, and one and another had their fling at you ; for if donkeys set to work to sing, you are pretty sure what the tune 'll be."

"Why, did they talk it over before Mr. Burge?" said Adam ; "or wasn't he there o' Saturday?"

"Oh, he went away before Carrol came ; and Casson—he's always for setting other folks right, you know—would have it Burge was the man to have the management of the woods. 'A substantial man,' says he, 'with pretty near sixty years' experience o' timber ; it 'ud be all very well for Adam Bede to act under him, but it isn't to be supposed the Squire 'd appoint a young fellow like Adam, when there's his elders and betters at hand?' But I said, 'That's a pretty notion o' yours, Casson. Why, Burge is the man to *buy* timber ; would you put the woods into his hands, and let him make his own bargains? I think you don't leave your customers to score their own drink, do you? And as for age, what that's worth depends on the quality of the liquor. It's pretty well known who's the backbone of Jonathan Burge's business.'"

"I thank you for your good word, Mr. Massey," said Adam. "But, for all that, Casson was partly i' the right for once. There's not much likelihood that th' old Squire 'ud ever consent t' employ me ; I offended him about two years ago, and he's never forgiven me."

"Why, how was that? You never told me about it," said Bartle.

"Oh, it was a bit o' nonsense. I'd made a frame for a screen for Miss Lyddy—she's always making something with her worsted-work, you know—and she'd given me particular orders about this screen, and there was as much talking and measuring as if we'd been planning a house. However, it was a nice bit o' work, and I liked doing it for her. But, you know, those little friggling things take a deal o' time. I only worked at it over-hours—often late at night—and I had to go to Treddleston over an' over again, about little bits o' brass nails and such gear ; and I turned the little knobs and the legs, and carved th' open work, after a pattern, as nice as could be. And I was uncommon pleased with it when it was done. And when I took it home, Miss Lyddy sent for me to bring it into her drawing-room, so as she might give me directions about fastening on the work—very fine needle-work, Jacob and Rachel a-kissing one another among the sheep, like a picture—and th' old Squire was setting there, for he mostly sits with her. Well, she was mighty pleased

with the screen, and then she wanted to know what pay she was to give me. I didn't speak at random—you know it's not my way; I'd calculated pretty close, though I hadn't made out a bill, and I said, one pound thirteen. That was paying for the mater'als and paying me, but none too much for my work. The old Squire looked up at this, and peered in his way at the screen, and said, 'One pound thirteen for a gimcrack like that! Lydia, my dear, if you must spend money on these things, why don't you get them at Rosseter, instead of paying double price for clumsy work here? Such things are not work for a carpenter like Adam. Give him a guinea, and no more.' Well, Miss Lyddy, I reckon, believed what he told her, and she's not overfond o' parting with the money herself—she's not a bad woman at bottom, but she's been brought up under his thumb; so she began fidgeting with her purse, and turned as red as her ribbon. But I made a bow, and said, 'No, thank you, madam; I'll make you a present o' the screen, if you please. I've charged the regular price for my work, and I know it's done well; and I know, begging his honor's pardon, that you couldn't get such a screen at Rosseter under two guineas. I'm willing to give you my work—it's been done in my own time, and nobody's got anything to do with it but me; but if I'm paid, I can't take a smaller price than I asked, because that 'ud be like saying, I'd asked more than was just. With your leave, madam, I'll bid you good-morning.' I made my bow and went out before she'd time to say any more, for she stood with her purse in her hand, looking almost foolish. I didn't mean to be disrespectful, and I spoke as polite as I could; but I can give in to no man, if he wants to make it out as I'm trying t' overreach him. And in the evening the footman brought me the one pound thirteen wrapped in paper. But since then I've seen pretty clear as th' old squire can't abide me."

"That's likely enough—that's likely enough," said Bartle, meditatively. "The only way to bring him round would be to show him what was for his own interest, and that the captain may do—that the captain may do."

"Nay, I don't know," said Adam; "the squire's 'cute enough, but it takes something else besides 'cuteness to make folks see what'll be their interest in the long run. It takes some conscience and belief in right and wrong. I see that pretty clear. You'd hardly ever bring round th' old squire to believe he'd gain as much in a straightfor'ard way as by tricks and turns. And, besides, I've no much mind to work under

him : I don't want to quarrel with any gentleman, more particular an' old gentleman turned eighty, and I know we couldn't agree long. If the captain was master o' th' estate, it 'ud be different, he's got a conscience, and a will to do right, and I'd sooner work for him nor for any man living."

"Well, well, my boy, if good-luck knocks at your door, don't you put your head out at window and tell it to be gone about its business, that's all. You must learn to deal with odd and even in life, as well as in figures. I tell you now, as I told you ten years ago, when you pommelled young Mike Holdsworth for wanting to pass a bad shilling, before you knew whether he was in jest or earnest—you're over-hasty and proud, and apt to set your teeth against folks that don't square to your notions. It's no harm for me to be a bit fiery and stiff-backed ; I'm an old schoolmaster, and shall never want to get on to a higher perch. But where's the use of all the time I've spent in teaching you writing and mapping and mensuration, if you're not to get for'ard in the world, and show folks there's some advantage in having a head on their shoulders, instead of a turnip ? Do you mean to go on turning up your nose at every opportunity, because it's got a bit of a smell about it that nobody finds out but yourself ? It's as foolish as that notion of yours that a wife is to make a working-man comfortable. Stuff and nonsense ! stuff and nonsense ! Leave that to fools that never got beyond a sum in simple addition. Simple addition enough ! Add one fool to another fool, and in six years' time six fools more—they're all of the same denomination, big and little's nothing to do with the sum !"

During this rather heated exhortation to coolness and discretion, the pipe had gone out, and Bartle gave the climax to his speech by lighting a match furiously against the hob, after which he puffed with fierce resolution, fixing his eyes still on Adam, who was trying not to laugh.

"There's a good deal o' sense in what you say, Mr. Massey," Adam began, as soon as he felt quite serious, "as there always is. But you'll give in that it's no business o' mine to be building on chances that may never happen. What I've got to do is to work as well as I can with the tools and mater'als I've got in my hands. If a good chance comes to me, I'll think o' what you've been saying ; but till then, I've got nothing to do but to trust to my own hands and my own head-piece. I'm turning over a little plan for Seth and me to go into the cabinet-making a bit by ourselves, and win a extra pound or two in that way. But it's getting late now—it'll be pretty near eleven

before I'm at home, and mother may happen to lie awake; she's more fidgety nor usual now. So I'll bid you good-night."

"Well, well, we'll go to the gate with you—it's a fine night," said Bartle, taking up his stick. Vixen was at once on her legs, and without farther words the three walked out into the starlight, by the side of Bartle's potato-beds, to the little gate.

"Come to the music o' Friday night, if you can, my boy," said the old man, as he closed the gate after Adam, and leaned against it.

"Ay, ay," said Adam, striding along toward the streak of pale road. He was the only object moving on the wide common. The two gray donkeys, just visible in front of the gorse bushes, stood as still as limestone images—as still as the gray-thatched roof of the mud cottage a little farther on. Bartle kept his eye on the moving figure till it passed into the darkness; while Vixen, in a state of divided affection, had twice run back to the house to bestow a parenthetic lick on her puppies.

"Ay, ay," muttered the schoolmaster, as Adam disappeared; "there you go stalking along—stalking along; but you wouldn't have been what you are if you hadn't had a bit of old lame Bartle inside you. The strongest calf must have something to suck at. There's plenty of these big, lumbering fellows 'ud have never known their A B C, if it hadn't been for Bartle Massey. Well, well, Vixen, you foolish wench, what is it, what is it? I must go in, must I? Ay, ay, I'm never to have a will o' my own any more. And those pups, what do you think I'm to do with 'em when they're twice as big as you?—for I'm pretty sure the father was that hulking bull-terrier of Will Baker's—wasn't he now, eh, you sly hussy?" (Here Vixen tucked her tail between her legs, and ran forward into the house. Subjects are sometimes broached which a well-bred female will ignore.)

"But where's the use of talking to a woman with babbies?" continued Bartle, "she's got no conscience—no conscience—it's all run to milk!"

CHAPTER XXII.

GOING TO THE BIRTHDAY FEAST.

THE thirtieth of July was come, and it was one of those half dozen warm days which sometimes occur in the middle of a rainy English summer. No rain had fallen for the last three or four days, and the weather was perfect for that time of the year: there was less dust than usual on the dark green hedge-rows, and on the wild chamomile that starred the roadside, yet the grass was dry enough for the little children to roll on it, and there was no cloud but a long dash of light, downy ripple, high, high up in the far-off blue sky. Perfect weather for an out-door July merry-making, yet surely not the best time of year to be born in. Nature seems to make a hot pause just then—all the loveliest flowers are gone; the sweet time of early growth and vague hopes is past; and yet the time of harvest and ingathering is not come, and we tremble at the possible storms that may ruin the precious fruit in the moment of its ripeness. The woods are all of one dark monotonous green; the wagon-loads of hay no longer creep along the lanes, scattering their sweet-smelling fragments on the black-berry branches; the pastures are often a little tanned, yet the corn has not got its last splendor of red and gold; the lambs and calves have lost all traces of their innocent, frisky prettiness and have become stupid young sheep and cows. But it is a time of leisure on the farm—that pause between hay and corn-harvest, and so the farmers and laborers in Hayslope and Broxton thought the captain did well to come of age just then, when they could give their undivided minds to the flavor of the great cask of ale which had been brewed the autumn after “the heir” was born and was to be tapped on his twenty-first birthday. The air had been merry with the ringing of church bells very early this morning, and every one had made haste to get through the needful work before twelve, when it would be time to think of getting ready to go to the Chase.

The midday sun was streaming into Hetty’s bedchamber, and there was no blind to temper the heat with which it fell on her head as she looked at herself in the old specked glass. Still, that was the only glass she had in which she could see her neck and arms, for the small hanging glass she had

fetched out of the next room—the room that had been Dinah's—would show her nothing but her little chin, and that beautiful bit of neck where the roundness of her cheek melted into another roundness shadowed by dark delicate curls. And to-day she thought more than usual about her neck and arms ; for at the dance this evening she was not to wear any neckerchief, and she had been busy yesterday with her spotted pink-and-white frock, that she might make the sleeves either long or short at will. She was dressed now just as she was to be in the evening, with a tucker made of “ real ” lace, which her aunt had lent her for this unparalleled occasion, but with no ornaments besides ; she had even taken out her small round earrings which she wore every day. But there was something more to be done, apparently, before she put on her neckerchief and long sleeves, which she was to wear in the daytime, for now she unlocked the drawer that held her private treasures. It is more than a month since we saw her unlock that drawer before, and now it holds new treasures, so much more precious than the old ones that these are thrust into the corner. Hetty would not care to put the large colored glass earrings into her ears now ; for see ! she has got a beautiful pair of gold and pearls and garnet, lying snugly in a pretty little box lined with white satin. Oh, the delight of taking out that little box and looking at the earrings ! Do not reason about it, my philosophical reader, and say that Hetty, being very pretty, must have known that it did not signify whether she had on any ornaments or not ; and that, moreover, to look at earrings which she could not possibly wear out of her bedroom could hardly be a satisfaction, the essence of vanity being a reference to the impressions produced on others ; you will never understand women's natures if you are so excessively rational. Try rather to divest yourself of all your rational prejudices, as much as if you were studying the psychology of a canary-bird, and only watch the movements of this pretty round creature as she turns her head on one side with an unconscious smile at the earrings nestled in the little box. Ah ! you think, it is for the sake of the person who has given them to her, and her thoughts are gone back now to the moment when they were put into her hands. No ; else why should she have cared to have earrings rather than anything else ? and I know that she had longed for earrings from among all the ornaments she could imagine.

“ Little, little ears ! ” Arthur had said, pretending to pinch them one evening, as Hetty sat beside him on the grass with

out her hat. "I wish I had some pretty earrings!" she said in a moment, almost before she knew what she was saying—the wish lay so close to her lips, it *would* flutter past them at the slightest breath. And the next day—it was only last week—Arthur had ridden over to Rosseter on purpose to buy them. That little wish so naively uttered, seemed to him the prettiest bit of childishness—he had never heard anything like it before; and he had wrapped the box up in a great many covers, that he might see Hetty unwrapping it with growing curiosity, till at last her eyes flashed back their new delight in his.

No, she was not thinking most of the giver when she smiled at the earrings, for now she is taking them out of the box, not to press them to her lips, but to fasten them in her ears—only for one moment to see how pretty they look, as she peeps at them in the glass against the wall, with first one position of the head and then another, like a listening bird. It is impossible to be wise on the subject of earrings as one looks at her; what should those delicate pearls and crystals be made for, if not for such ears? One cannot even find fault with the tiny round hole which they leave when they are taken out; perhaps water-nixies, and such lovely things without souls, have these little round holes in their ears by nature, ready to hang jewels in. And Hetty must be one of them; it is too painful to think that she is a woman, with a woman's destiny before her—a woman spinning in young ignorance a light web of folly and vain hopes which may one day close round her and press upon her, a rancorous poisoned garment, changing all at once her fluttering, trivial butterfly sensations into a life of deep human anguish.

But she cannot keep in the earrings long, else she may make her uncle and aunt wait. She puts them quickly into the box again, and shuts them up. Some day she will be able to wear any earrings she likes, and already she lives in an invisible world of brilliant costumes, shimmering gauze, soft satin, and velvet, such as the lady's maid at the Chase has shown her in Miss Lydia's wardrobe; she feels the bracelets on her arms, and treads on a soft carpet in front of a tall mirror. But she has one thing in the drawer which she can venture to wear to day, because she can hang it on the chain of dark-brown berries which she has been used to wear on grand days, with a tiny flat scent-bottle at the end of it tucked inside her frock; and she *must* put on her brown berries—her neck would look so unfinished without it. Hetty was not quite so fond of the locket as of the earrings, though it was a handsome large locket, with enamelled flowers at the back, and a beauti-

ful gold border round the glass, which showed a light-brown, slightly-waving lock, forming a background for two little dark rings. She must keep it under her clothes, and no one would see it. But Hetty had another passion ; only a little less strong than her love of finery, and that other passion made her like to wear the locket even hidden in her bosom. She would always have worn it, if she had dared to encounter her aunt's questions about a ribbon around her neck. So now she slipped it on her long chain of dark-brown berries, and snapped the chain round her neck. It was not a very long chain, only allowing the locket to hang a little way below the edge of her frock. And she now had nothing to do but to put on her long sleeves, her new white gauze neckerchief, and her straw hat trimmed with white to-day, instead of the pink, which had become rather faded under the July sun. That hat made the drop of bitterness in Hetty's cup to-day, for it was not quite new—everybody would see that it was a little tanned against the white ribbon—and Mary Burge, she felt sure, would have a new hat or bonnet on. She looked for consolation at her fine white cotton stockings ; they really were very nice indeed, and she had given almost all her spare money for them. Hetty's dream of the future could not make her insensible to triumph in the present ; to be sure, Captain Donnithorne loved her so, that he would never care about looking at other people, but then those other people didn't know how he loved her, and she was not satisfied to appear shabby and insignificant in their eyes even for a short space.

The whole party was assembled in the house-place when Hetty went down, all of course in their Sunday clothes ; and the bells had been ringing so this morning in honor of the captain's twenty-first birthday, and the work had all been got done so early, that Marty and Tommy were not quite easy in their minds until their mother had assured them that going to church was not part of the day's festivities. Mr. Poyser had once suggested that the house should be shut up, and left to take care of itself ; "for," said he, "there's no danger of any bodys breaking in—ivery body'll be at the Chase, thieves an' all. If we lock th' house up, all the men can go ; it's a day they wonna see twice in their lives." But Mrs. Poyser answered with great decision : "I never left the house to take care of itself since I was a missis, and I niver will. There's been ill-looking tramps enoo' about the place this last week, to carry off ivery ham an' ivery spoon we'n got : and they all collogue together, them tramps, as it's a mercy they hanna

come and pisoned the dogs and murdered us all in our beds afore we know'd, some Friday night when we'n got the money in th' house to pay the men. And it's like enough the tramps know where we're going as well as we do oursens ; for if Old Harry wants any work done, you may be sure he'll find the means."

"Nonsense about murdering us in our beds," said Mr. Poyser ; "I've got a gun i' our room, hanna I? and thee'st got ears as 'ud find it out if a mouse was knawing the bacon. Howiver, if thou wouldstna be easy, Alick can stay at home i' the forepart o' the day, and Tom can come back tow'rds five o'clock, and let Alick have his turn. They may let Growler loose if anybody offers to do mischief, and there's Alick's dog, too, ready enough to set his tooth in a tramp if Alick gives him a wink."

Mrs. Poyser accepted this compromise, but thought it advisable to bar and bolt to the utmost ; and now, at the last moment before starting, Nancy, the dairy-maid, was closing the shutters of the house-place, although that window, lying under the immediate observation of Alick and the dogs, might have been supposed the least likely to be selected for a burglarious attempt.

The covered cart, without springs, was standing ready to carry the whole family except the men-servants ; Mr. Poyser and the grandfather sat on the seat in front, and within there was room for all the women and children ; the fuller the cart the better, because then the jolting would not hurt so much, and Nancy's broad person and thick arms were an excellent cushion to be pitched on. But Mr. Poyser drove at no more than a walking pace, that there might be as little risk of jolting as possible on this warm day ; and there was time to exchange greetings and remarks with the foot-passengers who were going the same way, specking the paths between the green meadows and the golden cornfields with bits of movable bright color—a scarlet waistcoat to match the poppies that nodded a little too thickly among the corn, or a dark-blue neckerchief with ends flaunting across a brand new white smock-frock. All Broxton and all Hayslope were to be at the Chase, and make merry there in honor of "th' heir ;" and the old men and women, who had never been so far down this side of the hill for the last twenty years, were being brought from Broxton and Hayslope in one of the farmer's wagons, at Mr. Irwine's suggestion. The church bells had struck up again now—a last tune, before the ringers came down the hill

to have their share of the festival ; and before the bells had finished, other music was heard approaching, so that even Old Brown, the sober horse that was drawing Mr. Poyser's cart, began to prick up his ears. It was the band of the Benefit Club, which had mustered in all its glory ; that is to say, in bright-blue scarfs and blue favors, and carrying its banner with the motto, "Let brotherly love continue," encircling a picture of a stone-pit.

The carts, of course, were not to enter the Chase. Every one must get down at the lodges, and the vehicles must be sent back.

"Why, the Chase is like a fair a'ready," said Mrs. Poyser as she got down from the cart, and saw the groups scattered under the great oaks, and the boys running about in the hot sunshine to survey the tall poles surmounted by the fluttering garments that were to be the prize of the successful climbers. "I should ha' thought there wasna so many people i' the two parishes. Massy on us ! how hot it is out o' the shade. Come here, Totty, else your little face 'ull be burnt to a scratchin' ! They might ha' cooked the dinners i' that open space, an' saved the fires. I shall go to Mrs. Best's room an' sit down."

"Stop a bit, stop a bit," said Mr. Poyser. "There's th' wagin comin' wi' the old folks in't ; it'll be such a sight as wonna come o'er again, to see 'em get down an' walk along all together. You remember some on 'em i' their prime, eh, father ?"

"Ay, ay," said old Martin, walking slowly under the shades of the lodge porch, from which he could see the aged party descend. "I remember Jacob Taft walking fifty mile after the Scotch raybels, when they turned back from Stoniton."

He felt himself quite a youngster with a long life before him, as he saw the Hayslope patriarch, old Feyther Taft, descend from the wagon, and walk toward him, in his brown night-cap, and leaning on his two sticks.

"Well, Mester Taft," shouted old Martin, at the utmost stretch of his voice—for though he knew the old man was stone-deaf, he could not omit the propriety of a greeting—"you're hearty yit. You can enjoy yoursen to-day, for all you're ninety an' better."

"Your sarvant, mesters. your sarvant," said Feyther Taft in a treble tone, perceiving that he was in company.

The aged group, under care of sons or daughters, them-

selves worn and gray, passed on along the least winding carriage-road toward the house where a special table was prepared for them ; while the Poyser party wisely struck across the grass under the shade of the great trees, but not out of view of the house-front, with its sloping lawn and flower-beds, or of the pretty striped marquee at the edge of the lawn, standing at right angles with two larger marquees on each side of the open green space where the games were to be played. The house would have been nothing but a plain, square mansion of Queen Anne's time, but for the remnant of an old abbey to which it was united at one end, in much the same way as one may sometimes see a new farm-house rising high and prim at the end of older and lower farm-offices. The fine old remnant stood a little backward and under the shadow of tall beeches, but the sun was now on the taller and more advanced front, the blinds were all down, and the house seemed asleep in the hot midday ; it made Hetty quite sad to look at it ; Arthur must be somewhere in the back rooms, with the grand company, where he could not possibly know that she was come, and she would not see him for a long, long while—not till after dinner, when they said he was to come up and make a speech.

But Hetty was wrong in part of her conjecture. No grand company was come, except the Irwines, for whom the carriage had been sent early, and Arthur was at that moment not in a back room, but walking with the rector into the broad stone cloisters of the old abbey, where the long tables were laid for all the cottage tenants and the farm-servants. A very handsome young Briton he looked to-day, in high spirits and a bright-blue frock-coat. The highest mode—his arm no longer in a sling. So open-looking and candid, too ; but candid people have their secrets, and secrets leave no lines in young faces.

"Upon my word," he said, as he entered the cool cloisters, "I think the cottagers have the best of it ; these cloisters make a delightful dining-room on a hot day. That was capital advice of yours, Irwine, about the dinners—to let them be as orderly and comfortable as possible, and only for the tenants ; especially as I had only a limited sum after all ; for though my grandfather talked of *carte blanche*, he couldn't make up his mind to trust me, when it came to the point."

"Never mind, you'll give more pleasure in this quiet way," said Mr. Irwine. "In this sort of thing people are constantly confounding liberality with riot and disorder. It sounds very

grand to say that so many sheep and oxen were roasted whole, and everybody ate who liked to come ; but in the end it generally happens that no one has had an enjoyable meal. If the people get a good dinner and a moderate quantity of ale in the middle of the day, they'll be able to enjoy the games as the day cools. You can't hinder some of them from getting too much toward evening, but drunkenness and darkness go better together than drunkenness and daylight."

"Well, I hope there won't be much of it. I've kept the Treddleston people away by having a feast for them in the town ; and I've got Casson and Adam Bede, and some other good fellows, to look to the giving out of ale in the booths, and to take care things don't go too far. Come, let us go up above now, and see the dinner-tables for the large tenants."

They went up the stone staircase leading simply to the long gallery above the cloisters, a gallery where all the dusty, worthless old pictures had been banished for the last three generations—mouldy portraits of Queen Elizabeth and her ladies, General Monk with his eye knocked out, Daniel very much in the dark among the lions, and Julius Cæsar on horseback, with a high nose and a laurel crown, holding his Commentaries in his hand.

"What a capital thing it is that they saved this piece of the old abbey," said Arthur. "If I'm ever master here, I shall do up the gallery in first-rate style ; we've got no room in the house a third as large as this. That second table is for the farmers' wives and children : Mrs. Best said it would be more comfortable for the mothers and children to be by themselves. I was determined to have the children, and make a regular family thing of it. I shall be 'the old squire' to those little lads and lasses some day, and they'll tell their children what a much finer young fellow I was than my own son. There's a table for the women and children below as well. But you will see them all—you will come up with me after dinner, I hope?"

"Yes, to be sure," said Mr. Irwine. "I wouldn't miss your maiden speech to the tenantry."

"And there will be something else you'll like to hear," said Arthur. "Let's go into the library, and I'll tell you all about it while my grandfather is in the drawing-room with the ladies. Something that will surprise you," he continued, as they sat down. "My grandfather has come round after all."

"What, about Adam?"

"Yes ; I should have ridden over to tell you about it,

only I was so busy. You know I told you I had quite given up arguing the matter with him—I thought it was hopeless ; but yesterday morning he asked me to come in here to him before I went out, and astonished me by saying that he had decided on all the new arrangements he should make in consequence of old Satchell being obliged to lay by work, and that he intended to employ Adam in superintending the woods at a salary of a guinea a week, and the use of a pony, to be kept here. I believe the secret of it is, he saw from the first it would be a profitable plan, but he had some particular dislike to Adam to get over—and besides, the fact that I propose a thing is generally a reason with him for rejecting it. There's the most curious contradiction in my grandfather ; I know he means to leave me all the money he has saved, and he is likely enough to have cut off poor Aunt Lydia, who has been a slave to him all her life, with only five hundred a year, for the sake of giving me all the more ; and yet I sometimes think he positively hates me because I'm his heir. I believe if I were to break my neck he would feel it the greatest misfortune that could befall him, and yet it seems a pleasure to him to make my life a series of petty annoyances."

"Ah ! my boy, it is not only woman's love that is ἀπέρωτος ἔρωρ, as old Æschylus calls it. There's plenty of 'unloving love' in the world of a masculine kind. But tell me about Adam. Has he accepted the post ? I don't see that it can be much more profitable than his present work, though, to be sure, it will leave him a good deal of time on his own hands."

"Well, I felt some doubt about it when I spoke to him, and he seemed to hesitate at first. His objection was that he thought he should not be able to satisfy my grandfather. But I begged him as a personal favor to me not to let any reason prevent him from accepting the place, if he really liked the employment, and would not be giving up anything that was more profitable to him. And he assured me he should like it of all things : it would be a great step forward for him in business, and it would enable him to do what he had long wished to do—to give up working for Burge. He says he shall have plenty of time to superintend a little business of his own, which he and Seth will carry on, and will perhaps be able to enlarge by degrees. So he has agreed at last, and I have arranged that he shall dine with the large tenants to-day ; and I mean to announce the appointment to them, and ask them to drink Adam's health. It's a little drama I've got up in

honor of my friend Adam. He's a fine fellow, and I like the opportunity of letting people know that I think so."

"A drama in which friend Arthur piques himself on having a pretty part to play," said Mr. Irwine, smiling. But when he saw Arthur color, he went on reluctantly, "My part, you know, is always that of the Old Foggy who sees nothing to admire in the young folks. I don't like to admit that I'm proud of my pupil when he does graceful things. But I must play the amiable old gentleman for once, and second your toast in honor of Adam. Has your grandfather yielded on the other point too, and agreed to have a respectable man as steward?"

"Oh no," said Arthur, rising from his chair with an air of impatience, and walking along the room with his hands in his pockets. "He's got some project or other about letting the Chase Farm, and bargaining for a supply of milk and butter for the house. But I ask no questions about it—it makes me too angry. I believe he means to do all the business himself, and have nothing in the shape of a steward. It's amazing what energy he has, though."

"Well, we'll go to the ladies now," said Mr. Irwine, rising too. "I want to tell my mother what a splendid throne you've prepared for her under the marquee."

"Yes, and we must be going to luncheon too," said Arthur. "It must be two o'clock, for there is the gong beginning to sound for the tenants' dinners."

CHAPTER XXIII.

DINNER-TIME.

WHEN Adam heard that he was to dine up stairs with the large tenants, he felt rather uncomfortable at the idea of being exalted in this way above his mother and Seth, who were to dine in the cloisters below. But Mr. Mills, the butler, assured him that Captain Donnithorne had given particular orders about it, and would be very angry if Adam was not there.

Adam nodded, and went up to Seth, who was standing a few yards off. "Seth, lad," he said, "the captain has sent

to say I'm to dine up stairs—he wishes it particular, Mr. Mills says, so I suppose it 'ud be behaving ill for me not to go. But I don't lik sitting up above thee and mother, as if I was better than my own flesh and blood. Thee't not take it unkind, I hope?"

"Nay, nay, lad," said Seth, "thy honor's our honor; and if thee get'st respect thee'st won it by thy own deserts. The further I see thee above me, the better, so long as thee feel'st like a brother to me. It's because o' thy being appointed over the woods, and it's nothing but what's right. That's a place o' trust, and thee't above a common workman now."

"Ay," said Adam, "but nobody knows a word about it yet. I haven't given notice to Mr. Burge about leaving him, and I don't like to tell anybody else about it before he knows, for he'll be a good bit hurt, I doubt. People 'ull be wondering to see me there, and they'll like enough be guessing the reason, and asking questions, for there's been so much talk up and down about my having the place, this last three weeks."

"Well, thee canst say thee wast ordered to come without being told the reason. That's the truth. And mother 'ull be fine and joyful about it. Let's go and tell her."

Adam was not the only guest invited to come up stairs on other grounds than the amount he contributed to the rent-roll. There were other people in the two parishes who derived dignity from their functions rather than from their pocket, and of these Bartle Massey was one. His lame walk was rather slower than usual on this warm day, so Adam lingered behind when the bell rang for dinner, that he might walk up with his old friend; for he was a little too shy to join the Poyser party on this public occasion. Opportunities of getting to Hetty's side would be sure to turn up in the course of the day, and Adam contented himself with that, for he disliked any risk of being "joked" about Hetty; the big, outspoken, fearless man was very shy and diffident as to his love-making.

"Well, Mester Massey," said Adam, as Bartle came up, "I'm going to dine up stairs with you to-day: the captain's sent me orders."

"Ah!" said Bartle, pausing, with one hand on his back. "Then there's something in the wind—there's something in the wind. Have you heard anything about what the old squire means to do?"

"Why, yes," said Adam; "I'll tell you what I know, be-

cause I believe you can keep a still tongue in your head if you like ; and I hope you'll not let drop a word till it's common talk, for I've particular reasons against its being known."

"Trust to me, my boy, trust to me. I've got no wife to worm it out of me, and then run out and cackle it in everybody's hearing. If you trust a man let him be a bachelor—let him be a bachelor."

"Well, then, it was so far settled yesterday, that I'm to take the management o' the woods. The captain sent for me, t' offer it me, when I was seeing to the poles and things here, and I've agreed to't. But if anybody asks any questions up stairs, just you take no notice, and turn the talk to something else, and I'll be obliged to you. Now, let us go on, for we're pretty nigh the last, I think."

"I know what to do, never fear," said Bartle, moving on. "The news will be good sauce to my dinner. Ay, ay, my boy, you'll get on. I'll back you for an eye at measuring, and a head-piece for figures, against any man in this country ; and you've had good teaching—you've had good teaching."

When they got up stairs, the question which Arthur had left unsettled, as to who was to be president and who vice, was still under discussion, so that Adam's entrance passed without remark.

"It stands to sense," Mr. Casson was saying, "as old Mr. Poyser, as is th' oldest man i' the room, should sit at top o' the table. I wasn't butler fifteen year without learning the rights and wrongs about dinner."

"Nay, nay," said old Martin, "I'n gi'en up to my son ; I'm no tenant now : let my son take my place. Th' ould foulks ha' had their turn ; they mun make way for the young uns."

"I should ha' thought the biggest tenant had the best right, more nor the oldest," said Luke Britton, who was not fond of the critical Mr. Poyser ; "there's Mester Holdsworth has more land nor anybody else on th' estate."

"Well," said Mr. Poyser, "suppose we say the man w' the foulest land shall sit at top ; then whoever gets th' honor, there'll be no envying on him."

"Eh ! here's Mester Massey," said Mr. Craig, who, being a neutral in the dispute, had no interest but in conciliation ; "the schoolmaster ought to be able to tell you what's right. Who's to sit at the top o' the table, Mr. Massey ?"

"Why, the broadest man," said Bartle ; "and then he

won't take up other folks' room ; and the next broadest must sit at bottom."

This happy mode of settling the dispute produced much laughter—a smaller joke would have sufficed for that. Mr. Casson, however, did not feel it compatible with his dignity and superior knowledge to join in the laugh, until it turned out that he was fixed on as the second broadest man. Martin Poyser, the younger, as the broadest, was to be president, and Mr. Casson, as the next broadest, was to be vice.

Owing to this arrangement, Adam, being, of course, at the bottom of the table, fell under the immediate observation of Mr. Casson, who, too much occupied with the question of precedence, had not hitherto noticed his entrance. Mr. Casson, we have seen, considered Adam "rather lifted up and peppery-like : " he thought the gentry made more fuss about this young carpenter than was necessary ; they made no fuss about Mr. Casson, although he had been an excellent butler for fifteen years.

"Well, Mr. Bede, you're one o' them as mounts hup'ards apace," he said, when Adam sat down. "You've niver dined here before, as I remember."

"No, Mr. Casson," said Adam, in his strong voice, that could be heard along the table, "I've never dined here before, but I come by Captain Donnithorne's wish, and I hope it's not disagreeable to anybody here."

"Nay, nay," said several voices at once, "we're glad ye're come. Who's got anything to say again' it ?"

"And ye'll sing us 'Over the hills and far away,' after dinner, wonna ye ?" said Mr. Chowne. "That's a song I'm uncommon fond on."

"Peeh !" said Mr. Craig ; "it's not to be named beside o' the Scotch tunes. I've never cared about singing myself ; I've had something better to do. A man that's got the names and the nature o' plants in's head isna likely to keep a hollow place t' hold tunes in. But a second cousin o' mine, a drovier, was a rare hand at remembering the Scotch tunes. He'd got nothing else to think on."

"The Scotch tunes !" said Bartle Massey, contemptuously ; "I've heard enough o' the Scotch tunes to last me while I live. They're fit for nothing but to frighten the birds with—that's to say the English birds, for the Scotch birds may sing Scotch for what I know. Give the lads a bagpipes instead of a rattle, and I'll answer for it the corn 'll be safe."

"Yes, there's folks as find a pleasure in undervallying what they know but little about," said Mr. Craig.

"Why, the Scotch tunes are just like a scolding, nagging woman," Bartle went on, without deigning to notice Mr. Craig's remark. "They go on with the same thing over and over again, and never come to a reasonable end. Anybody 'ud think the Scotch tunes had always been asking a question of somebody as deaf as old Taft, and had never got an answer yet."

Adam minded the less about sitting by Mr Casson, because this position enabled him to see Hetty, who was not far off him at the next table. Hetty, however, had not even noticed his presence yet, for she was giving angry attention to Totty, who insisted on drawing up her feet on to the bench in antique fashion, and thereby threatened to make dusty marks on Hetty's pink-and-white frock. No sooner were the little fat legs pushed down than up they came again, for Totty's eyes were too busy in staring at the large dishes to see where the plum-pudding was, for her to retain any consciousness of her legs. Hetty got quite out of patience, and at last, with a frown and pout, and gathering tears, she said,

"Oh dear, aunt, I wish you'd speak to Totty, she keeps putting her legs up so, and messing my frock."

"What's the matter wi' the child? She can niver please you," said the mother. "Let her come by the side o' me, then; I can put up wi' her."

Adam was looking at Hetty, and saw the frown and pout, and the dark eyes seeming to grow larger with pettish half-gathered tears. Quiet Mary Burge, who sat near enough to see that Hetty was cross, and that Adam's eyes were fixed on her, thought that so sensible a man as Adam must be reflecting on the small value of beauty in a woman whose temper was bad. Mary was a good girl, not given to indulge in evil feelings, but she said to herself that, since Hetty had a bad temper, it was better Adam should know it. And it was quite true that, if Hetty had been plain, she would have looked very ugly and unamiable at the moment, and no one's moral judgment upon her would have been in the least beguiled. But really there was something quite charming in her pettishness; it looked so much more like innocent distress than ill-humor; and the severe Adam felt no movement of disapprobation; he only felt a sort of amused pity, as if he had seen a kitten setting up its back, or a little bird with its feathers ruffled. He could not gather what was vexing her, but it was impossible to him to feel otherwise than that she was the prettiest thing in the world, and that if he could have his way, nothing should

ever vex her any more. And presently, when Totty was gone, she caught his eyes, and her face broke into one of its brightest smiles, as she nodded to him. It was a bit of flirtation ; she knew Mary Burge was looking at them. But the smile was like wine to Adam.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE HEALTH-DRINKING.

WHEN the dinner was over, and the first draughts from the great cask of birthday ale were brought up, room was made for the broad Mr. Poyser at the side of the table, and two chairs were placed at the head. It had been settled very definitely what Mr. Poyser was to do when the young squire should appear, and for the last five minutes he had been in a state of abstraction, with his eyes fixed on the dark picture opposite, and his hands busy with the loose cash and other articles in his breeches pockets.

When the young squire entered, with Mr. Irwine by his side, every one stood up, and this moment of homage was very agreeable to Arthur. He liked to feel his own importance, and, besides that, he cared a great deal for the good-will of these people ; he was fond of thinking that they had a hearty, special regard for him. The pleasure he felt was in his face as he said,

“ My grandfather and I hope all our friends here have enjoyed their dinner, and find my birthday ale good. Mr. Irwine and I are come to taste it with you, and I’m sure we shall all like anything the better that the rector shares with us.”

All eyes were now turned on Mr. Poyser, who, with his hands still busy in his pockets, began with the deliberateness of a slow-striking clock. “ Captain, my neighbors have put it upo’ me to speak for ’em to-day, for where folks think pretty much alike, one spokesman’s as good as a score. And though we’ve may happen got contrairy ways o’ thinking about a many things—one man lays down his land one way, an’ another another—an’ I’ll not take it upon me to speak to no man’s farming but my own—this I’ll say, as we’re all o’ one mind about our young squire. We’ve pretty nigh all on us known

you when you war a little un, an' we've niver known anything on you but what was good an' honorable. You speak fair an' y' act fair, an' we're joyful when we look forrard to your being our landlord, for we b'lieve you mean to do right by everybody, an' 'ull make no man's bread bitter to him if you can help it. That's what I mean, an' that's what we all mean ; an' when a man's said what he means, he'd better stop, for th' ale 'ull be none the better for stannin'. An' I'll not say how we like th' ale yit, for we warn a goin' to taste it till we'd drunk your health in it ; but the dinner was good, an' if there's anybody hasna enjoyed it, it must be the fault of his own inside. An' as for the rector's company, it's well known as that's welcome t' all the parish wherever he may be ; an' I hope, an' we all hope, as he'll live to see us old folks, an' wer children grown to men an' women, an' your honor a family man. I ve no more to say as concerns the present time, an' so we'll drink our young squire's health—three times three."

Hereupon a glorious shouting, a rapping, a jingling, a clattering, and a shouting, with plentiful *da capo*, pleasanter than a strain of sublimest music in the ears that received such a tribute for the first time. Arthur had felt a twinge of conscience during Mr. Poyser's speech, but it was too feeble to nullify the pleasure he felt in being praised. Did he not deserve what was said of him on the whole ? If there was something in his conduct that Poyser wouldn't have liked if he had known it, why, no man's conduct will bear too close an inspection, and Poyser was not likely to know it ; and, after all, what had he done ? Gone a little too far, perhaps, in flirtation, but another man in his place would have acted much worse ; and no harm would come—no harm *should* come, for the next time he was alone with Hetty he would explain to her that she must not think seriously of him or of what had passed. It was necessary to Arthur, you perceive, to be satisfied with himself ; uncomfortable thoughts must be got rid of by good intentions for the future, which can be formed so rapidly that he had time to be uncomfortable and to become easy again before Mr. Poyser's slow speech was finished, and when it was time for him to speak he was quite light-hearted.

"I thank you all, my good friends and neighbors," Arthur said, "for the good opinion of me and the kind feelings toward me which Mr. Poyser has been expressing on your behalf and on his own, and it will always be my heartiest wish to deserve them. In the course of things we may expect that, if I live, I shall one day or other be your landlord ; indeed, it is on the

ground of that expectation that my grandfather has wished me to celebrate this day and to come among you now ; and I look forward to this position, not merely as one of power and pleasure for myself, but as a means of benefiting my neighbors. It hardly becomes so young a man as I am to talk much about farming to you, who are most of you so much older, and are men of experience ; still I have interested myself a good deal in such matters, and learned as much about them as my opportunities have allowed ; and when the course of events shall place the estate in my hands, it will be my first desire to afford my tenants all the encouragement a landlord can give them in improving their land and trying to bring about a better practice of husbandry. It will be my wish to be looked on by all my deserving tenants as their best friend, and nothing would make me so happy as to be able to respect every man on the estate, and to be respected by him in return. It is not my place at present to enter into particulars ; I only meet your good hopes concerning me by telling you that my own hopes correspond to them—that what you expect from me I desire to fulfill ; and I am quite of Mr. Poyser's opinion, that when a man has said what he means he had better stop. But the pleasure I feel in having my own health drunk by you would not be perfect if we did not drink the health of my grandfather, who has filled the place of both parents to me. I will say no more until you have joined me in drinking his health on a day when he has wished me to appear among you as the future representative of his name and family."

Perhaps there was no one present except Mr. Irwine who thoroughly understood and approved Arthur's graceful mode of proposing his grandfather's health. The farmers thought the young squire knew well enough that they hated the old squire, and Mrs. Poyser said "he'd better not ha' stirred a kettle o' sour broth." The bucolic mind does not readily apprehend the refinements of good taste. But the toast could not be rejected, and when it had been drunk, Arthur said,

"I thank you, both for my grandfather and myself ; and now there is one more thing I wish to tell you, that you may share my pleasure about it, as I hope and believe you will. I think there can be no man here who has not a respect, and some of you, I am sure, have a very high regard, for my friend Adam Bede. It is well known to every one in this neighborhood that there is no man whose word can be more depended on than his ; that whatever he undertakes to do, he does well,

and is as careful for the interests of those who employ him as for his own. I'm proud to say that I was very fond of Adam when I was a little boy, and I have never lost my old feeling for him—I think that shows that I know a good fellow when I find him. It has long been my wish that he should have the management of the woods on the estate, which happen to be very valuable; not only because I think so highly of his character, but because he has the knowledge and the skill which fit him for the place. And I am happy to tell you that it is my grandfather's wish too, and it is now settled that Adam shall manage the woods—a change which I am sure will be very much for the advantage of the estate; and I hope you will by and by join me in drinking his health, and in wishing him all the prosperity in life that he deserves. But there is a still older friend of mine than Adam Bede present, and I need not tell you that it is Mr. Irwine. I'm sure you will agree with me that we must drink no other person's health until we have drunk his. I know you have all reason to love him, but no one of his parishioners has so much reason as I. Come, charge your glasses, and let us drink to our excellent rector—three times three!”

The toast was drunk with all the enthusiasm that was wanting to the last, and it certainly was the most picturesque moment in the scene when Mr. Irwine got up to speak, and all the faces in the room were turned toward him. The superior refinement of his face was much more striking than that of Arthur's when seen in comparison with the people round them. Arthur's was a much commoner British face, and the splendor of his new-fashioned clothes was more akin to the young farmer's taste in costume than Mr. Irwine's powder, and the well-brushed but well-worn black, which seemed to be his chosen suit for great occasions, for he had the mysterious secret of never wearing a new-looking coat.

“This is not the first time, by a great many,” he said, “that I have had to thank my parishioners for giving me tokens of their good-will, but neighborly kindness is among those things that are the more precious the older they get. Indeed, our pleasant meeting to-day is a proof that when what is good comes of age and is likely to live there is reason for rejoicing, and the relation between us as clergymen and parishioners came of age two years ago, for it is three-and-twenty years since I first came among you, and I see some tall, fine-looking young men here, as well as some blooming young women, that were far from looking as pleasantly at me

when I christened them, as I am happy to see them looking now. But I'm sure you will not wonder when I say, that among all those young men, the one in whom I have the strongest interest is my friend Mr. Arthur Donnithorne, for whom you have just expressed your regard. I had the pleasure of being his tutor for several years, and have naturally had opportunities of knowing him intimately which cannot have occurred to any one else present ; and I have some pride as well as pleasure in assuring you that I share your high hopes concerning him, and your confidence in his possession of those qualities which will make him an excellent landlord when the time shall come for him to take that important position among you. We feel alike on most matters on which a man who is getting toward fifty can feel in common with a young man of one-and-twenty, and he has just been expressing a feeling which I share very heartily, and I would not willingly omit the opportunity of saying so. That feeling is his value and respect for Adam Bede. People in a high station are of course more thought of and talked about, and have their virtues more praised, than those whose lives are passed in humble, every-day work ; but every sensible man knows how necessary that humble, every-day work is, and how important it is to us that it should be done well. And I agree with my friend Mr. Arthur Donnithorne in feeling that when a man whose duty lies in that sort of work shows a character which would make him an example in any station, his merit should be acknowledged. He is one of those to whom honor is due, and his friends should delight to honor him. I know Adam Bede well—I know what he is as a workman, and what he has been as a son and brother—and I am saying the simplest truth when I say that I respect him as much as I respect any man living. But I am not speaking to you about a stranger ; some of you are his intimate friends, and I believe there is not one here who does not know enough of him to join heartily in drinking his health."

As Mr. Irwine paused Arthur jumped up, and, filling his glass, said, "A bumper to Adam Bede, and may he live to have sons as faithful and clever as himself !"

No hearer, not even Bartle Massey, was so delighted with this toast as Mr. Poyser ; "tough work" as his first speech had been, he would have started up to make another if he had not known the extreme irregularity of such a course. As it was, he found an outlet for his feeling in drinking his ale unusually fast, and setting down his glass with a swing of his

arm and a determined rap. If Jonathan Burge and a few others felt less comfortable on the occasion, they tried their best to look contented, and so the toast was drunk with a good-will apparently unanimous.

Adam was rather paler than usual when he got up to thank his friends. He was a good deal moved by this public tribute—very naturally, for he was in the presence of all his little world, and it was uniting to do him honor. But he felt no shyness about speaking, not being troubled with small vanity or lack of words; he looked neither awkward nor embarrassed, but stood in his usual firm, upright attitude, with his head thrown a little backward and his hands perfectly still, in that rough dignity which is peculiar to intelligent, honest, well-built workmen, who are never wondering what is their business in the world.

“I’m quite taken by surprise,” he said. “I didn’t expect anything o’ this sort, for it’s a good deal more than my wages. But I’ve the more reason to be grateful to you, captain, and to you, Mr. Irwine, and to all my friends here, who’ve drunk my health, and wished me well. It ’ud be nonsense for me to be saying, I don’t at all deserve th’ opinion you have of me; that ’ud be poor thanks to you, to say that you’ve known me all these years, and yet haven’t sense enough to find out a great deal o’ truth about me. You think, if I undertake to do a bit o’ work, I’ll do it well, be my pay big or little—and that’s true. I’d be ashamed to stand before you here if it wasna true. But it seems to me, that’s a man’s plain duty, and nothing to be conceited about, and it’s pretty clear to me as I’ve never done more than my duty; for let us do what we will, it’s only making use o’ the sperrit and the powers that ha’ been given to us. And so this kindness o’ yours, I’m sure, is no debt you owe me, but a free gift, and as such I accept it and am thankful. And as to this new employment I’ve taken in hand, I’ll only say that I took it at Captain Donnithorne’s desire, and that I’ll try to fulfill his expectations. I’d wish for no better lot than to work under him, and to know that while I wa getting my own bread I was taking care of his int’rests. For I believe he’s one o’ those gentlemen as wishes to do the right thing, and to leave the world a bit better than he found it, which it’s my belief every man may do, whether he’s gentl. or simple, whether he sets a good bit o’ work going and finds the money, or whether he does the work with his own hands. There’s no occasion for me to say any

more about what I feel toward him : I hope to show it through the rest o' my life in my actions."

There were various opinions about Adam's speech ; some of the women whispered that he didn't show himself thankful enough, and seemed to speak as proud as could be ; but most of the men were of opinion that nobody could speak more straightfor'ard, and that Adam was as fine a chap as need to be. While such observations were being buzzed about, mingled with wonderings as to what the old squire meant to do for a bailiff, and whether he was going to have a steward, the two gentlemen had risen, and were walking round the table where the wives and children sat. There was none of the strong ale here, of course, but wine and dessert—sparkling gooseberry for the young ones, and some good sherry for the mothers. Mrs. Poyser was at the head of this table, and Totty was now seated in her lap, bending her small nose deep down into a wine-glass in search of the nuts floating there.

"How do you do, Mrs. Poyser?" said Arthur. "Weren't you pleased to hear your husband make such a good speech to-day?"

"Oh, sir, the men are mostly so tongue-tied—you're forced partly to guess what they mean, as you do wi' the dumb creatures."

"What! you think you could have made it better for him?" said Mr. Irwine, laughing.

"Well, sir, when I want to say anything, I can mostly find words to say it in, thank God. Not as I'm a-finding fault wi' my husband, for, if he's a man o' few words, what he says he'll stand to."

"I'm sure I never saw a prettier party than this," Arthur said, looking round at the apple-cheeked children. "My aunt and the Miss Irwines will come up and see you presently. They were afraid of the noise of the toasts, but it would be a shame for them not to see you at table."

He walked on, speaking to the mothers and patting the children, while Mr. Irwine satisfied himself with standing still, and nodding at a distance, that no one's attention might be disturbed from the young squire, the hero of the day. Arthur did not venture to stop near Hetty, but merely bowed to her as he passed along the opposite side. The foolish child felt her heart swelling with discontent ; for what woman was ever satisfied with apparent neglect, even when she knows it to be the mask of love? Hetty thought this was going to be the most miserable day she had had for a long while ; a mo-

ment of chill daylight and reality came across her dream; Arthur, who had seemed so near to her only a few hours before, was separated from her, as the hero of a great procession is separated from a small outsider in the crowd.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GAMES.

THE great dance was not to begin until eight o'clock; but for any lads and lasses who liked to dance on the shady grass before then, there was music always at hand; for was not the band of the Benefit Club capable of playing excellent jigs, reels, and hornpipes? And besides this, there was a grand band hired from Rosseter, who, with their wonderful wind-instruments and puffed-out cheeks, were themselves a delightful show to the small boys and girls. To say nothing of Joshua Rann's fiddle, which, by an act of generous forethought, he had provided himself with, in case any one should be of sufficiently pure taste to prefer dancing to a solo on that instrument.

Meantime, when the sun had moved off the great open space in front of the house, the games began. There were of course well-soaped poles to be climbed by the boys and youths, races to be run by the old women, races to be run in sacks, heavy weights to be lifted by the strong men, and a long list of challenges to such ambitious attempts as that of walking as many yards as possible on one leg—feats in which it was generally remarked that Wiry Ben, being "the lissom'st, springest fellow i' the country," was sure to be pre-eminent. To crown all, there was to be a donkey race—that sublimest of all races, conducted on the grand socialistic idea of everybody encouraging everybody else's donkey, and the sorriest donkey winning.

And soon after four o'clock, splendid old Mrs. Irwine, in her damask satin and jewels and black lace, was led out by Arthur, followed by the whole family party, to her raised seat under the striped marquee, where she was to give out the prizes to the victors. Staid, formal Miss Lydia had requested to resign that queenly office to the royal old lady, and Arthur

was pleased with this opportunity of gratifying his godmother's taste for stateliness. Old Mr. Donnithorne, the delicately-clean, finely-scented, withered old man, led out Miss Irwine, with his air of punctilious, acid politeness; Mr. Gawaine brought Miss Lydia, looking neutral and stiff in an elegant peach-blossom silk; and Mr. Irwine came last with his pale sister Anne. No other friend of the family, beside Mr. Gawaine, was invited to-day; there was to be a grand dinner for the neighboring gentry on the morrow, but to-day all the forces were required for the entertainment of the tenants.

There was a sunk fence in front of the marquee, dividing the lawn from the park, but a temporary bridge had been made for the passage of the victors, and the groups of people standing, or seated here and there on benches, stretched on each side of the open space from the white marquees up to the sunk fence.

"Upon my word it's a pretty sight," said the old lady, in her deep voice, when she was seated, and looked around on the bright scene with its dark green background; "and it's the last fête day I'm likely to see, unless you make haste and get married, Arthur. But take care you get a charming bride, else I would rather die without seeing her."

"You are so terribly fastidious, godmother," said Arthur, "I'm afraid I should never satisfy you with my choice."

"Well, I won't forgive you if she's not handsome. I can't be put off with amiability, which is always the excuse people are making for the existence of plain people. And she must not be silly; that will never do, because you'll want managing, and a silly woman can't manage you. Who is that tall young man, Dauphin, with the mild face? There—standing without his hat, and taking such care of that tall old woman by the side of him—his mother, of course. I like to see that."

"What, don't you know him, mother?" said Mr. Irwine. "That is Seth Bede, Adam's brother—a Methodist, but a very good fellow. Poor Seth has looked rather down-hearted of late; I thought it was because of his father's dying in that sad way; but Joshua Rann tells me he wanted to marry that sweet little Methodist preacher who was here about a month ago, and I suppose she refused him."

"Ah! I remember hearing about her; but there are no end of people here that I don't know, for they're grown up and altered so since I used to go about."

"What excellent sight you have!" said old Mr. Donnithorne, who was holding a double glass up to his eyes, "to

see the expression of that young man's face so far off. His face is nothing but a pale blurred spot to me. But I fancy I have the advantage of you when we come to look close. I can read small print without spectacles."

"Ah! my dear sir, you began with being very near-sighted, and those near-sighted eyes always wear the best. I want very strong spectacles to read with, but then I think my eyes get better and better for things at a distance. I suppose if I could live another fifty years, I should be blind to everything that wasn't out of other people's sight, like a man who stands in a well, and sees nothing but the stars."

"See," said Arthur, "the old women are ready to set out on their race now. Which do you bet on, Gawaine?"

"The long-legged one, unless they are going to have several heats, and then the little wiry one may win."

"There are the Poyzers, mother, not far off on the right hand," said Miss Irwine. "Mrs. Poyser is looking at you. Do take notice of her."

"To be sure I will," said the old lady, giving a gracious bow to Mrs. Poyser. "A woman who sends me such excellent cream cheese is not to be neglected. Bless me! what a fat child that is she is holding on her knee! But who is that pretty girl with dark eyes?"

"That is Hetty Sorrel," said Miss Lydia Donnithorne, "Martin Poyser's niece—a very likely young person, and well-looking too. My maid has taught her fine needle-work, and she has mended some lace of mine very respectably indeed—very respectably."

"Why, she has lived with the Poyzers six or seven years, mother; you must have seen her," said Miss Irwine.

"No, I've never seen her, child; at least, not as she is now," said Mrs. Irwine, continuing to look at Hetty. "Well-looking, indeed! she's a perfect beauty! I've never seen anything so pretty since my young days. What a pity such beauty as that should be thrown away among the farmers, when it's wanted so terribly among the good families without fortune! I dare say, now, she'll marry a man who'd have thought her just as pretty if she had had round eyes and red hair."

Arthur dared not turn his eyes toward Hetty, while Mrs. Irwine was speaking of her. He feigned not to hear, and to be occupied with something on the opposite side. But he saw her, plainly enough without looking; saw her in heightened beauty, because he heard her beauty praised—for other men's

opinion, you know, was like a native climate to Arthur's feelings: it was the air on which they thrived the best and grew strong. Yes! she *was* enough to turn any man's head; any man in his place would have done and felt the same. And to give her up after all, as he was determined to do, would be an act that he should always look back upon with pride.

"No, mother," said Mr. Irwine, replying to her last words, "I can't agree with you there. The common people are not quite so stupid as you imagine. The commonest man, who has his ounce of sense and feeling, is conscious of the difference between a lovely, delicate woman and a coarse one. Even a dog feels a difference in their presence. The man may be no better able than the dog to explain the influence the more refined beauty has on him, but he feels it."

"Bless me, Dauphin, what does an old bachelor like you know about it?"

"Oh, that is one of the matters in which old bachelors are wiser than married men, because they have time for more general contemplation. Your fine critic of women must never shackle his judgment by calling one woman his own; but, as an example of what I was saying, that pretty Methodist preacher I mentioned just now told me that she had preached to the roughest miners, and had never been treated with anything but the utmost respect and kindness by them. The reason is—though she doesn't know it—that there's so much tenderness, refinement, and purity about her. Such a woman as that brings with her 'airs from heaven' that the coarsest fellow is not insensible to."

"Here's a delicate bit of womanhood, or girlhood, coming to receive a prize, I suppose," said Mr. Gawaine. "She must be one of the racers in the sacks, who had set off before we came."

The "bit of womanhood" was our old acquaintance, Bessy Cranage, otherwise Chad's Bess, whose large red cheeks and blowsy person had undergone an exaggeration of color, which, if she had happened to be a heavenly body, would have made her sublime. Bessy, I am sorry to say, had taken to her earrings again since Dinah's departure, and was otherwise decked out in such small finery as she could muster. Any one who could have looked into poor Bessy's heart would have seen a striking resemblance between her little hopes and anxieties and Hetty's. The advantage, perhaps, would have been on Bessy's side in the matter of feeling. But then, you see, they were so very different outside! You would have

been inclined to box Bessy's ears, and you would have longed to kiss Hetty.

Bessy had been tempted to run the arduous race, partly from mere hoidenish gayety, partly because of the prize. Some one had said there were to be cloaks and other nice clothes for prizes, and she approached the marquee, fanning herself with her handkerchief, but with exultation sparkling in her round eyes.

"Here is the prize for the first sack-race," said Miss Lydia, taking a large parcel from the table where the prizes were laid, and giving it to Mrs. Irwine before Bessy came up; "an excellent program gown and a piece of flannel."

"You didn't think the winner was to be so young, I suppose, aunt?" said Arthur. "Couldn't you find something else for this girl, and save that grim-looking gown for one of the older women?"

"I have bought nothing but what is useful and substantial," said Miss Lydia, adjusting her own lace; "I should not think of encouraging a love of finery in young women of that class. I have a scarlet cloak, but that is for the old woman who wins."

This speech of Miss Lydia's produced rather a mocking expression in Mrs. Irwine's face as she looked at Arthur, while Bessy came up and dropped a series of courtesies.

"This is Bessy Cranage, mother," said Mr. Irwine, kindly, "Chad Cranage's daughter. You remember Chad Cranage, the blacksmith?"

"Yes, to be sure," said Mrs. Irwine. "Well, Bessy, here is your prize—excellent warm things for winter. I'm sure you have had hard work to win them this warm day."

Bessy's lip fell as she saw the ugly, heavy gown, which felt so hot and disagreeable, too, on this July day, and was such a great ugly thing to carry. She dropped her courtesies again, without looking up, and with a growing tremulousness about the corners of her mouth, and then turned away.

"Poor girl," said Arthur; "I think she's disappointed. I wish it had been something more to her taste."

"She's a bold-looking young person," observed Miss Lydia. "Not at all one I should like to encourage."

Arthur silently resolved that he would make Bessy a present of money before the day was over, that she might buy something more to her mind; but she, not aware of the consolation in store for her, turned out of the open space, where she was visible from the marquee, and throwing down the

odious bundle under a tree, began to cry—very much tittered at the while by the small boys. In this situation she was descried by her discreet matronly cousin, who lost no time in coming up, having just given the baby into her husband's charge.

"What's the matter wi' ye?" said Bess the matron, taking up the bundle and examining it. "Ye'n sweltered yoursen, I reckon, running that fool's race. An' here, they'n gi'en you lots o' good grogram an' flannel, as should ha' been gi'en by good rights to them as had the sense to keep away from such foolery. Ye might spare me a bit o' this grogram to make clothes for the lad—ye war ne'er ill-natured, Bess; I ne'er said that on ye."

"Ye may take it all, for what I care," said Bess the maiden, with a pettish movement, beginning to wipe away her tears and recover herself.

"Well, I could do wi't, if so be ye want to get rid on't," said the disinterested cousin, walking quickly away with the bundle, lest Chad's Bess should change her mind.

But the bonny-cheeked lass was blest with an elasticity of spirits that secured her from any rankling grief; and by the time the grand climax of the donkey race came on, her disappointment was entirely lost in the delightful excitement of attempting to stimulate the last donkey by hisses, while the boys applied the argument of sticks. But the strength of the donkey mind lies in adopting a course inversely as the arguments urged, which, well considered, requires as great a mental force as the direct sequence; and the present donkey proved the first-rate order of his intelligence by coming to a dead standstill just when the blows were thickest. Great was the shouting of the crowd, radiant the grinning of Bill Downes the stone-sawyer and the fortunate rider of this superior beast, which stood calm and stiff-legged in the midst of its triumph.

Arthur himself had provided the prizes for the men, and Bill was made happy with a splendid pocket-knife, supplied with blades and gimlets enough to make a man at home on a desert island. He had hardly returned from the marquee with the prize in his hand, when it began to be understood that Wiry Ben proposed to amuse the company, before the gentry went to dinner, with an impromptu and gratuitous performance—namely, a hornpipe, the main idea of which was doubtless borrowed; but this was to be developed by the dancer in so peculiar and complex a manner that no one

could deny him the praise of originality. Wiry Ben's pride in his dancing—an accomplishment productive of great effect at the yearly Wake—had needed only slightly elevating by an extra quantity of good ale, to convince him that the gentry would be very much struck with his performance of the horn-pipe ; and he had been decidedly encouraged in this idea by Joshua Rann, who observed that it was nothing but right to do something to please the young squire, in return for what he had done for them. You will be the less surprised at this opinion in so grave a personage when you learn that Ben had requested Mr. Rann to accompany him on the fiddle, and Joshua felt quite sure that though there might not be much in the dancing, the music would make up for it. Adam Bede, who was present in one of the large marquees, where the plan was being discussed, told Ben he had better not make a fool of himself—a remark which at once fixed Ben's determination : he was not going to let anything alone because Adam Bede turned up his nose at it.

"What's this, what's this?" said old Mr. Donnithorne. "Is it something you've arranged, Arthur? Here's the clerk coming with his fiddle, and a smart fellow with a nosegay in his button-hole."

"No," said Arthur ; "I know nothing about it. By Jove, he's going to dance ! It's one of the carpenters—I forget his name at this moment."

"It's Ben Cranage—Wiry Ben, they call him," said Mr. Irwine ; "rather a loose fish, I think. Anne, my dear, I see that fiddle-scraping is too much for you : you're getting tired. Let me take you in now, that you may rest till dinner."

Miss Anne rose assentingly, and the good brother took her away, while Joshua's preliminary scrapings burst into the "White Cockade," from which he intended to pass to a variety of tunes, by a series of transitions which his good ear really taught him to execute with some skill. It would have been an exasperating fact to him, if he had known it, that the general attention was too thoroughly absorbed by Ben's dancing for any one to give much heed to the music.

Have you ever seen a real English rustic perform a solo dance? Perhaps you have only seen a ballet rustic, smiling like a merry countryman in crockery, with graceful turns of the haunch and insinuating movements of the head. This is as much like the real thing as the "Bird Waltz" is like the song of birds. Wiry Ben never smiled ; he looked as serious

as a dancing monkey—as serious as if he had been an experimental philosopher ascertaining in his own person the amount of shaking and the varieties of angularity that could be given to the human limbs.

To make amends for the abundant laughter in the striped marquee, Arthur clapped his hands continually and cried “Bravo!” But Ben had one admirer whose eyes followed his movements with a fervid gravity that equalled his own. It was Martin Poyser, who was seated on a bench, with Tommy between his legs.

“What dost think o’ that?” he said to his wife. “He goes as pat to the music as if he was made o’ clock-work. I used to be a pretty good un at dancing myself when I was lighter, but I could niver ha’ hit it just to the hair like that.”

“It’s little matter what his limbs are, to my thinking,” replied Mrs. Poyser. “He’s empty enough i’ the upper story, or he’d niver come jigging an’ stamping i’ that way, like a mad grasshopper, for the gentry to look at him. They’re fit to die wi’ laughing, I can see.”

“Well, well, so much the better, it amuses ’em,” said Mr. Poyser, who did not easily take an irritable view of things. “But they’re going away now, t’ have their dinner, I reckon. We’ll move about a bit, shall we? and see what Adam Bede’s doing. He’s got to look after the drinking and things; I doubt he hasna had much fun.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DANCE.

ARTHUR had chosen the entrance-hall for the ball-room; very wisely, for no other room could have been so airy, or would have had the advantage of the wide doors opening into the garden, as well as a ready entrance into the other rooms. To be sure a stone floor was not the pleasantest to dance on, but then, most of the dancers had known what it was to enjoy a Christmas dance on kitchen quarries. It was one of those entrance-halls which make the surrounding rooms look like closets, with stucco angels, trumpets, and flower-wreaths on the lofty ceiling, and great medallions of miscellaneous heroes on the walls, alternating with statues in niches. Just the sort of place to be ornamented well with green boughs, and

Mr. Craig had been proud to show his taste and his hot-house plants on the occasion. The broad steps of the stone staircase were covered with cushions to serve as seats for the children, who were to stay till half-past nine with the servant-maids to see the dancing; and as this dance was confined to the chief tenants, there was abundant room for every one. The lights were charmingly disposed in colored paper lamps, high up among green boughs, and the farmers' wives and daughters, as they peeped in, believed no scene could be more splendid; they knew now quite well in what sort of rooms the king and queen lived, and their thoughts glanced with some pity toward cousins and acquaintances who had not this fine opportunity of knowing how things went on in the great world. The lamps were already lit, though the sun had not long set, and there was that calm light out of doors in which we seem to see all objects more distinctly than in the broad day.

It was a pretty scene outside the house: the farmers and their families were moving about the lawn, among the flowers and shrubs, or along the broad straight road leading from the east front, where a carpet of mossy grass spread on each side studded here and there with a dark flat-boughed cedar, or a grand pyramidal fir sweeping the ground with its branches, all tipped with a fringe of paler green. The groups of cottagers in the park were gradually diminishing, the young ones being attracted toward the lights that were beginning to gleam from the windows of the gallery in the abbey, which was to be their dancing-room, and some of the sober elder ones thinking it time to go home quietly. One of these was Lisbeth Bede, and Seth went with her, not from filial attention only, for his conscience would not let him join in dancing. It had been rather a melancholy day to Seth; Dinah had never been more constantly present with him than in this scene, where everything was so unlike her. He saw her all the more vividly after looking at the thoughtless faces and gay-colored dresses of the young women—just as one feels the beauty and the greatness of a pictured Madonna the more when it has been for a moment screened from us by a vulgar head in a bonnet. But this presence of Dinah in his mind only helped him to bear the better with his mother's mood, which had been becoming more and more querulous for the last hour. Poor Lisbeth was suffering from a conflict of feelings. Her joy and pride in the honor paid to her darling son Adam was beginning to be worsted in the conflict with the jealousy and fretfulness which had revived when Adam came to tell her that Captain Donni-

thorne desired him to join the dancers in the hall. Adam was getting more and more out of her reach ; she wished all the old troubles back again, for then it mattered more to Adam what his mother said and did.

"Eh ! it's fine talkin' o' dancin'," she said ; "an' thy father not a five week in's grave. An' I wish I war there too, i'stid o' bein' left to take up merrier folks's room above ground."

"Nay, don't look at it i' that way, mother," said Adam, who was determined to be gentle to her to-day. "I don't mean to dance—I shall only look on. And since the captain wishes me to be there, it 'ud look as if I thought I knew better than him, to say e'd rather not stay. And thee know'st how he's behaved to me to-day."

"Eh ! thee't do as thee lik'st, for thy old mother's got no right t' hinder thee. She's nought but the old husk, and thee'st slipped away from her like the ripe nut."

"Well, mother," said Adam, "I'll go and tell the captain as it hurts thy feelings for me to stay, and I'd rather go home upo' that account ; he won't take it ill then, I dare say, and I'm willing." He said this with some effort, for he really longed to be near Hetty this evening.

"Nay, nay, I wonna ha' thee do that—the young squire 'ull be angered. Go an' do what thee't ordered to do, an' me an' Seth 'ull go whome. I know it's a grit honor for thee to be so looked on—an' who's prouder on it nor thy mother ? Hadna she the cumber o' rearin' thee an' doin' for thee all these 'ears ?"

"Well, good-by, then, mother—good-by, lad—remember Gyp when you get home," said Adam, turning away toward the gate of the pleasure-grounds, where he hoped he might be able to join the Poysers, for he had been so occupied throughout the afternoon that he had had no time to speak to Hetty. His eyes soon detected a distant group, which he knew to be the right one, returning to the house along the broad gravel road, and he hastened on to meet them.

"Why, Adam, I'm glad to get sight on y' again," said Mr. Poyser, who was carrying Totty on his arm. "You're going t' have a bit o' fun, I hope, now your work's all done. And here's Hetty has promised no end o' partners, an' I've just been askin' her if she'd agreed to dance wi' you, an' she says no."

"Well, I didn't think o' dancing to-night," said Adam, already tempted to change his mind, as he looked at Hetty.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Poyser. "Why, everybody's goin' to dance to-night, all but th' old squire and Mrs. Irwine. Mrs. Best's been tellin' us as Miss Lyddy and Miss Irwine 'ull dance, an' the young squire 'ull pick my wife for his furst partner, t' open the ball; so she'll be forced to dance, though she's laid by ever sin' the Christmas afore the little un was born. You canna for shame stand still, Adam, an' you a fine young fellow, and can dance as well as anybody."

"Nay, nay," said Mrs. Poyser, "it 'ud be unbecomin'. I know the dancin's nonsense; but if you stick at everything because it's nonsense, you wonna go far i' this life. When your broth's ready made for you, you mun swallow the thick-enin' or else let the broth alone."

"Then if Hetty 'ull dance with me," said Adam, yielding either to Mrs. Poyser's argument or to something else, "I'll dance whichever dance she's free."

"I've got no partner for the fourth dance," said Hetty; "I'll dance that with you, if you like."

"Ah!" said Mr. Poyser, "but you mun dance the first dance, Adam, else it'll look partic'ler. There's plenty o' nice partners to pick an' choose from, an' it's hard for the gells when the men stan' by and don't ask 'em."

Adam felt the justice of Mr. Poyser's observation: it would not do for him to dance with no one beside Hetty; and remembering that Jonathan Burge had some reason to feel hurt to-day, he resolved to ask Miss Mary to dance with him the first dance, if she had no other partner.

"There's the big clock strikin' eight," said Mr. Poyser; "we must make haste in now, else the squire and the ladies 'ull be in afore us, an' that wouldna look well."

When they had entered the hall, and the three children under Molly's charge had been seated on the stairs, the folding-doors of the drawing-room were thrown open, and Arthur entered in his regimentals, leading Mrs. Irwine to a carpet-covered dais ornamented with hot-house plants, where she and Miss Anne were to be seated with old Mr. Donnithorne, that they might look on at the dancing, like kings and queens in the plays. Arthur had put on his uniform to please the tenants, he said, who thought as much of his militia dignity as if it had been an elevation to the premiership. He had not the least objection to gratify them in that way: his uniform was very advantageous to his figure.

The old squire, before sitting down, walked round the hall to greet the tenants and make polite speeches to the wives; he was always polite, ^{but} the farmers had found out, after

long puzzling, that this polish was one of the signs of hardness. It was observed that he gave his most elaborate civility to Mrs. Poyser to-night, inquiring particularly about her health, recommending her to strengthen herself with cold water as he did, and avoid all drugs. Mrs. Poyser courtesied and thanked him with great self-command, but when he had passed on, she whispered to her husband, "I'll lay my life he's brewin' some nasty turn against us. Old Harry doesna wag his tail so for nothin'." Mr. Poyser had no time to answer, for now Arthur came up and said, "Mrs. Poyser, I'm come to request the favor of your hand for the first dance; and Mr. Poyser you must let me take you to my aunt, for she claims you as her partner."

The wife's pale cheek flushed with a nervous sense of unwonted honor, as Arthur led her to the top of the room; but Mr. Poyser, to whom an extra glass had restored his youthful confidence in his good looks and good dancing, walked along with them quite proudly, secretly flattering himself that Miss Lydia had never had a partner in *her* life who could lift her off the ground as he would. In order to balance the honors given to the two parishes, Miss Irwine danced with Luke Britton, the largest Broxton farmer, and Mr. Gawaine led out Mrs. Britton. Mr. Irwine, after seating his sister Anne, had gone to the Abbey gallery, as he had agreed with Arthur beforehand, to see how the merriment of the cottagers was prospering. Meanwhile, all the less distinguished couples had taken their places: Hetty was led out by the inevitable Mr. Craig, and Mary Burge by Adam; and now the music struck up, and the glorious country dance, best of all dances, began.

Pity it was not a boarded floor! Then the rhythmic stamping of the thick shoes would have been better than any drums. That merry stamping, that gracious nodding of the head, that waving bestowal of the hand—where can we see them now? That simple dancing of well-covered matrons, laying aside for an hour the cares of house and dairy, remembering but not affecting youth, not jealous but proud of the young maidens by their side—that holiday sprightliness of portly husbands paying little compliments to their wives, as if their courting days were come again—those lads and lasses a little confused and awkward with their partners, having nothing to say—it would be a pleasant variety to see all that sometimes, instead of low dresses and large skirts, and scanning glances exploring costumes, and languid men in lackered boots smiling with double meaning.

There was but one thing to mar Martin Poyser's pleasure in this dance ; it was, that he was always in close contact with Luke Britton, that slovenly farmer. He thought of throwing a little glazed coldness into his eye in the crossing of hands ; but then, as Miss Irwine was opposite to him instead of the offensive Luke, he might freeze the wrong person. So he gave his face up to hilarity, unchilled by moral judgments.

How Hetty's heart beat as Arthur approached her ! He had hardly looked at her to-day ; now he *must* take her hand. Would he press it ? would he look at her ? She thought she should cry if he gave her no sign of feeling. Now he was there—he had taken her hand—yes, he was pressing it. Hetty turned pale as she looked up to him for an instant and met his eyes before the dance carried him away. That pale look came upon Arthur like the beginning of a dull pain, which clung to him, though he must dance and smile and joke all the same. Hetty would look so when he told her what he had to tell her ; and he should never be able to bear it—he should be a fool and give way again. Hetty's look did not really mean so much as he thought ; it was only the sign of a struggle between the desire for him to notice her, and the dread lest she should betray the desire to others. But Hetty's face had a language that transcended her feelings. There are faces which nature charges with a meaning and pathos not belonging to the single human soul that flutters beneath them, but speaking the joys and sorrows of foregone generations—eyes that tell of deep love which doubtless has been and is somewhere, but not paired with these eyes—perhaps paired with pale eyes that can say nothing ; just as a national language may be instinct with poetry unfelt by the lips that use it. That look of Hetty's oppressed Arthur with a dread which yet had something of a terrible unconfessed delight in it, that she loved him too well. There was a hard task before him, for at that moment he felt he would have given up three years of his youth for the happiness of abandoning himself without remorse to his passion for Hetty.

These were the incongruous thoughts in his mind as he led Mrs. Poyser, who was panting with fatigue, and secretly resolving that neither judge nor jury should force her to dance another dance, to take a quiet rest in the dining-room, where supper was laid out for the guests to come and take it as they chose.

"I've desired Hetty to remember as she's got to dance

wi' you, sir," said the good, innocent woman ; "for she's so thoughtless, she'd be like enough to go and engage herself for ivery dance. So I told her not to promise too many."

"Thank you, Mrs. Poyser," said Arthur, not without a twinge. "Now sit down in this comfortable chair, and here is Mills ready to give you what you would like best."

He hurried away to seek another matronly partner, for due honor must be paid to the married women before he asked any of the young ones ; and the country dances, and the stamping, and the gracious nodding, and the waving of hands, went on joyously.

At last the time had come for the fourth dance—longed for by the strong, grave Adam, as if he had been a delicate-handed youth of eighteen ; for we are all very much alike when we are in our first love ; and Adam had hardly ever touched Hetty's hand for more than a transient greeting—had never danced with her but once before. His eyes had followed her eagerly to-night in spite of himself, and had taken in deeper draughts of love. He thought she behaved so prettily, so quietly ; she did not seem to be flirting at all ; she smiled less than usual ; there was almost a sweet sadness about her. "God bless her !" he said, inwardly ; "I'd make her life a happy un if a strong arm to work for her and a heart to love her could do it."

And then there stole over him delicious thoughts of coming home from work, and drawing Hetty to his side, and feeling her cheek softly pressed against his, till he forgot where he was, and the music and the tread of her feet might have been the falling of rain and the roaring of the wind, for what he knew.

But now the third dance was ended, and he might go up to her and claim her hand. She was at the far end of the hall near the staircase, whispering with Molly, who had just given the sleeping Totty into her arms before running to fetch shawls and bonnets from the landing. Mrs. Poyser had taken the two boys away into the dining-room to give them some cake before they went home in the cart with grandfather, and Molly was to follow as fast as possible.

"Let me hold her," said Adam, as Molly turned up stairs ; "the children are so heavy when they're asleep."

Hetty was glad of the relief, for to hold Totty in her arms, standing, was not at all a pleasant variety to her ; but this second transfer had the unfortunate effect of rousing Totty, who was not behind any child of her age in peevishness at an

unseasonable awaking. While Hetty was in the act of placing her in Adam's arms, and had not yet withdrawn her own, Totty opened her eyes, and forthwith fought out with her left fist at Adam's arm, and with her right caught at the string of brown beads round Hetty's neck. The locket leaped out from her frock, and the next moment the string was broken, and Hetty, helpless, saw beads and locket scattered wide on the floor.

"My locket, my locket," she said, in a loud, frightened whisper, to Adam; "never mind the beads."

Adam had already seen where the locket fell, for it had attracted his glance as it leaped out of her frock. It had fallen on the raised wooden dais where the band sat, not on the stone floor; and as Adam picked it up, he saw the glass with the dark and light locks of hair under it. It had fallen that side upward, so the glass was not broken. He turned it over on his hand, and saw the enamelled gold back.

"It isn't hurt," he said, as he held it towards Hetty, who was unable to take it because both of her hands were occupied with Totty.

"Oh, it doesn't matter, I don't mind about it," said Hetty, who had been pale and was now red.

"Not matter?" said Adam, gravely. "You seemed very frightened about it. I'll hold it till you're ready to take it," he added, quietly closing his hand over it, that she might not think he wanted to look at it again.

By this time Molly had come with bonnet and shawl, and as soon as she had taken Totty, Adam placed the locket in Hetty's hand. She took it with an air of indifference, and put it in her pocket; in her heart, vexed and angry with Adam because he had seen it, but determined now that she would show no more signs of agitation.

"See," she said, "they're taking their places to dance; let us go."

Adam assented silently. A puzzled alarm had taken possession of him. Had Hetty a lover he didn't know of?—for none of her relations, he was sure, would give her a locket like that; and none of her admirers, with whom he was acquainted, was in the position of an accepted lover, as the giver of that locket must be. Adam was lost in the utter impossibility of finding any person for his fears to alight on; he could only feel with a terrible pang that there was something in Hetty's life unknown to him; that, while he had been rocking himself in the hope that she would come to love him, she was

already loving another. The pleasure of the dance with Hetty was gone ; his eyes, when they rested on her, had an uneasy questioning expression in them ; he could think of nothing to say to her ; and she, too, was out of temper and disinclined to speak. They were both glad when the dance was ended.

Adam was determined to stay no longer ; no one wanted him, and no one would notice if he slipped away. As soon as he got out of doors he began to walk at his habitual rapid pace, hurrying along without knowing why, busy with the painful thought that the memory of this day, so full of honor and promise to him, was poisoned forever. Suddenly, when he was far on through the Chase, he stopped, startled by a flash of reviving hope. After all, he might be a fool, making a great misery out of a trifle. Hetty, fond of finery as she was, might have bought the thing herself. It looked too expensive for that—it looked like the things on white satin in the great jeweler's shop at Rosseter. But Adam had very imperfect notions of the value of such things, and he thought it would certainly not cost more than a guinea. Perhaps Hetty had had as much as that in Christmas boxes, and there was no knowing but she might have been childish enough to spend it in that way ; she was such a young thing, and she couldn't help loving finery ! But then, why had she been so frightened about it at first, and changed color so, and afterwards pretended not to care ? Oh, that was because she was ashamed of his seeing that she had such a smart thing—she was conscious that it was wrong for her to spend the money on it, and she knew that Adam disapproved of finery. It was a proof she cared about what he liked and disliked. She must have thought from his silence and gravity afterwards that he was very much displeased with her, that he was inclined to be harsh and severe towards her foibles. And as he walked on more quietly, chewing the cud of his new hope, his only uneasiness was that he had behaved in a way that might chill Hetty's feelings toward him. For this last view of the matter *must* be the true one. How could Hetty have an accepted lover, quite unknown to him ? She was never away from her uncle's house for more than a day ; she could have no acquaintances that did not come there, and no intimacies unknown to her uncle and aunt. It would be folly to believe that the locket was given to her by a lover. The little ring of dark hair he felt sure was her own ; he could form no guess about the light hair under it, for he had not seen it very distinctly. It might be a bit of her father's or mother's, who had died

when she was a child, and she would naturally put a bit of her own along with it.

And so Adam went to bed comforted, having woven for himself an ingenious web of probabilities—the surest screen a wise man can place between himself and the truth. His last waking thoughts melted into a dream that he was with Hetty again at the Hall Farm, and then he was asking her to forgive him for being so cold and silent.

And while he was dreaming this, Arthur was leading Hetty to the dance, and saying to her in low hurried tones, “I shall be in the wood the day after to-morrow at seven; come as early as you can.” And Hetty’s foolish joys and hopes, which had flown away for a little space, scared by a mere nothing, now all came fluttering back, unconscious of the real peril. She was happy for the first time this long day, and wished that dance would last for hours. Arthur wished it too; it was the last weakness he meant to indulge in; and a man never lies with more delicious languor under the influence of a passion, than when he has persuaded himself that he shall subdue it to-morrow.

But Mrs. Poyser’s wishes were quite the reverse of this, for her mind was filled with dreary forebodings as to the retardation of to-morrow morning’s cheese in consequence of these late hours. Now that Hetty had done her duty and danced one dance with the young squire, Mr. Poyser must go out and see if the cart was come back to fetch them, for it was half past ten o’clock, and notwithstanding a mild suggestion on his part that it would be bad manners for them to be the first to go, Mrs. Poyser was resolute on the point, “manners or no manners.”

“What, going already, Mrs. Poyser?” said old Mr. Donni-thorne, as she came to courtesy and take leave; “I thought we should not part with any of our guests till eleven; Mrs. Irwine and I, who are elderly people, think of sitting out the dance till then.”

“Oh, your honor, it’s all right and proper for gentlefolks to stay up by candle-light—they’ve got no cheese on their minds. We’re late enough as it is, an’ there’s no lettin’ the cows know as they mustn’t want to be milked so early to-morrow mornin’. So, if you’ll please t’ excuse us, we’ll take our leave.”

“Eh!” she said to her husband, as they set off in the cart, “I’d sooner ha’ brewin’ day and washin’ day together than one o’ these pleasurin’ days. There’s no work so tirin’

as danglin' about an' starin' an' not rightly knowin' what you're goin' to do next; an' keepin' your face i' smilin' order like a grocer o' market-day, for fear people shouldna think you civil enough. An' you've nothing to show for't when it's done, if it isn't a yallow face wi' eatin' things as disagreee."

"Nay, nay," said Mr. Poyser, who was in his merriest mood, and felt that he had had a great day, "a bit o' pleasuring's good for thee sometimes. An' thee danc'st as well as any of 'em, for I'll back thee against all the wives i' the parish for a light foot an' ankle. An' it was a great honor for th' young squire to ask thee first—I reckon it was because I sat at the head o' the table an' made the speech. An' Hetty too—*she* never had such a partner before—a fine young gentleman in reg'mentals. It'll serve you to talk on, Hetty, when you're an old woman—how you danced wi' the young squire, the day he come o' age."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A CRISIS.

It was beyond the middle of August—nearly three weeks after the birthday feast. The reaping of the wheat had begun in our north midland county of Loamshire, but the harvest was likely still to be retarded by the heavy rains, which were causing inundations and much damage throughout the country. From this last trouble the Broxton and Hayslope farmers, on their pleasant uplands and in their brook-watered valleys, had not suffered, and as I cannot pretend that they were such exceptional farmers as to love the general good better than their own, you will infer that they were not in very low spirits about the rapid rise in the price of bread, so long as there was hope of gathering in their own corn undamaged; and occasional days of sunshine and drying winds flattered this hope.

The eighteenth of August was one of these days, when the sunshine looked brighter in all eyes for the gloom that went before. Grand masses of cloud were hurried across the blue sky, and the great round hills behind the Chase seemed alive with their flying shadows; the sun was hidden for a moment,

and then shone out warm again like a recovered joy ; the leaves, still green, were tossed off the hedgerow trees by the wind ; around the farm-houses there was a sound of clapping doors, the apples fell in the orchards, and the stray horses on the green sides of the lanes and on the common had their manes blown about their faces. And yet the wind seemed only part of the general gladness, because the sun was shining. A merry day for the children, who ran and shouted to see if they could top the wind with their voices ; and the grown-up people, too, were in good spirits, inclined to believe in yet finer days, when the wind had fallen. If only the corn were not ripe enough to be blown out of the husk and scattered as untimely seed !

And yet a day on which a blighting sorrow may fall upon a man. For if it be true that Nature at certain moments seems charged with a presentiment of one individual lot, must it not also be true that she seems unmindful, unconscious of another ? For there is no hour that has not its births of gladness and despair, no morning brightness that does not bring new sickness to desolation as well as new forces to genius and love. There are so many of us, and our lots are so different : what wonder that Nature's mood is often in harsh contrast with the great crisis of our lives ? We are children of a large family, and must learn, as such children do, not to expect that our hurts will be made much of—to be content with little nurture and caressing, and help each other the more.

It was a busy day with Adam, who of late had done almost double work ; for he was continuing to act as foreman for Jonathan Burge, until some satisfactory person could be found to supply his place, and Jonathan was slow to find that person. But he had done the extra work cheerfully, for his hopes were buoyant again about Hetty. Every time she had seen him since the birthday, she had seemed to make an effort to behave all the more kindly to him, that she might make him understand she had forgiven his silence and coldness during the dance. He had never mentioned the locket to her again ; too happy that she smiled at him—still happier because he observed in her a more subdued air, something that he interpreted as the growth of womanly tenderness and seriousness. “ Ah ! ” he thought, again and again, “ she's only seventeen ; she'll be thoughtful enough after a while. And her aunt allays says how clever she is at the work. She'll make a wife as mother 'll have no occasion to grumble

at, after all." To be sure, he had only seen her at home twice since the birthday ; for one Sunday when he was intending to go from church to the Hall Farm, Hetty had joined the party of upper servants from the Chase, and had gone home with them—almost as if she were inclined to encourage Mr. Craig. "She's takin' too much likin' to them folks i' the housekeeper's room," Mrs. Poyser remarked. "For my part, I was never overfond o' gentlefolk's servants—they're mostly like the fine ladies' fat dogs, nayther good for barking nor butcher's meat, but on'y for show." And another evening she was gone to Treddleston to buy some things, though to his great surprise, as he was returning home, he saw her at a distance getting over a stile quite out of the Treddleston road. But when he hastened to her, she was very kind, and asked him to go in again when he had taken her to the yard gate. She had gone a little farther into the fields, after coming from Treddleston, because she didn't want to go in, she said: it was so nice to be out of doors, and her aunt always made such a fuss about it if she wanted to go out. "Oh, do come in with me!" she said as he was going to shake hands with her at the gate, and he could not resist that. So he went in and Mrs. Poyser was contented with only a slight remark on Hetty's being later than was expected ; while Hetty, who had looked out of spirits when he met her, smiled, and talked, and waited on them all with unusual promptitude.

That was the last time he had seen her ; but he meant to make leisure for going to the Farm to-morrow. To-day, he knew, was her day for going to the Chase to sew with the lady's maid, so he would get as much work done as possible this evening, that the next might be clear.

One piece of work that Adam was superintending was some slight repairs at the Chase Farm, which had been hitherto occupied by Satchell, as bailiff, but which it was now rumored that the old squire was going to let to a smart man in top boots, who had been seen to ride over it one day. Nothing but the desire to get a tenant could account for the squire's undertaking repairs, though the Saturday-evening party at Mr. Casson's agreed over their pipes that no man in his senses would take the Chase Farm unless there was a bit more plough-land laid to it. However that might be, the repairs were ordered to be executed with all despatch ; and Adam, acting for Mr. Burge, was carrying out the order with his usual energy. But to-day, having been occupied elsewhere, he had not been able to arrive at the Chase Farm till

late in the afternoon ; and he then discovered that some old roofing, which he had calculated on preserving, had given way. There was clearly no good to be done with this part of the building without pulling it all down ; and Adam immediately saw in his mind a plan for building it up again, so as to make the most convenient of cow-sheds and calf-pens, without any great expense for materials. So, when the workmen were gone, he sat down, took out his pocket-book, and busied himself with sketching a plan, and making a specification of the expenses, that he might show it to Burge the next morning, and set him on persuading the squire to consent. To "make a good job" of anything, however small, was always a pleasure to Adam ; and he sat on a block, with his book resting on a planing-table, whistling low every now and then, and turning his head on one side with a just perceptible smile of gratification—of pride, too, for if Adam loved a bit of good work, he loved also to think, "I did it !" And I believe the only people who are free from that weakness are those who have no work to call their own. It was nearly seven before he had finished and put on his jacket again ; and, on giving a last look round, he observed that Seth, who had been working here to-day, had left his basket of tools behind him. "Why, th' lad's forgot his tools," thought Adam, "and he's got to work up at the shop to-morrow. There never was such a chap for wool-gathering ; he'd leave his head behind him, if it was loose. However, it's lucky I've seen 'em ; I'll carry 'em home."

The buildings of the Chase Farm lay at one extremity of the Chase, at about ten minutes' walking distance from the Abbey. Adam had come thither on his pony, intending to ride to the stables, and put up his nag on his way home. At the stables he encountered Mr. Craig, who had come to look at the captain's new horse, on which he was to ride away the day after to-morrow ; and Mr. Craig detained him to tell how all the servants were to collect at the gate of the court-yard to wish the young squire luck as he rode out ; so that, by the time Adam had gone into the Chase, and was striding along with the basket of tools over his shoulder, the sun was on the point of setting, and was sending level crimson rays among the great trunks of the old oaks, and touching every bare patch of ground with a transient glory, that made it look like a jewel dropped upon the grass. The wind had fallen now, and there was only enough breeze to stir the delicate-stemmed leaves. Any one who had been sitting in the house all day

would have been glad to walk now ; but Adam had been quite enough in the open air to wish to shorten his way home ; and he bethought himself that he might do so by striking across the Chase and going through the Grove, where he had never been for years. He hurried on across the Chase, stalking along the narrow paths between the fern, with Gyp at his heels, not lingering to watch the magnificent changes of the light—hardly once thinking of it—yet feeling its presence in a certain calm happy awe which mingled itself with his busy working-day thoughts. How could he help feeling it? The very deer felt it, and were more timid.

Presently, Adam's thoughts recurred to what Mr. Craig had said about Arthur Donnithorne, and pictured his going away, and the changes that might take place before he came back ; then they travelled back affectionately over the old scenes of boyish companionship, and dwelt on Arthur's good qualities, which Adam had a pride in, as we all have in the virtues of the superior who honors us. A nature like Adam's, with a great need of love and reverence in it, depends for so much of its happiness on what it can believe and feel about others ! And he had no ideal world of dead heroes ; he knew little of the life of men in the past ; he must find the beings to whom he could cling with loving admiration among those who came within speech of him. These pleasant thoughts about Arthur brought a milder expression than usual into his keen rough face ; perhaps they were the reason why, when he opened the old green gate leading into the Grove, he paused to pat Gyp, and say a kind word to him.

After that pause, he strode on again along the broad winding path through the Grove. What grand beeches ! Adam delighted in a fine tree of all things ; as the fisherman's sight is keenest on the sea, so Adam's perceptions were more at home with trees than with other objects. He kept them in his memory, as a painter does, with all the flecks and knots in their bark, all the curves and angles of their boughs ; and had often calculated the height and contents of a trunk to a nicety, as he stood looking at it. No wonder that, notwithstanding his desire to get on, he could not help pausing to look at a curious large beech which he had seen standing before him at a turning in the road, and convince himself that it was not two trees wedded together, but only one. For the rest of his life he remembered that moment when he was calmly examining the beech, as a man remembers his last glimpse of the home where his youth was passed, before the

road turned, and he saw it no more. The beech stood at the last turning before the Grove ended in an archway of boughs that let in the eastern light ; and as Adam stepped away from the tree to continue his walk, his eyes fell on two figures about twenty yards before him.

He remained as motionless as a statue, and turned almost as pale. The two figures were standing opposite to each other, with clasped hands, about to part ; and while they were bending to kiss, Gyp, who had been running among the brushwood, came out, caught sight of them, and gave a sharp bark. They separated with a start—one hurried through the gate out of the grove, and the other, turning round, walked slowly, with a sort of saunter, toward Adam, who still stood transfixed and pale, clutching tighter the stick with which he held the basket of tools over his shoulder, and looking at the approaching figure with eyes in which amazement was fast turning to fierceness.

Arthur Donnithorne looked flushed and excited ; he had tried to make unpleasant feelings more bearable by drinking a little more wine than usual at dinner to-day, and was still enough under its flattering influence to think more lightly of this unwished-for rencontre with Adam than he would otherwise have done. After all, Adam was the best person who could have happened to see him and Hetty together ; he was a sensible fellow, and would not babble about it to other people. Arthur felt confident that he could laugh the thing off and explain it away. And so he sauntered forward with elaborate carelessness—his flushed face, his evening dress of fine cloth and fine linen, his white jewelled hands half thrust into his waistcoat pockets, all shone upon by the strange evening light which the light clouds had caught up even to the zenith, and were now shedding down between the topmost branches above him.

Adam was still motionless, looking at him as he came up. He understood it all now—the locket and everything else that had been doubtful to him : a terrible scorching light showed him the hidden letters that changed the meaning of the past. If he had moved a muscle, he must inevitably have sprung upon Arthur like a tiger ; and in the conflicting emotions that filled those long moments he had told himself that he would not give loose to passion—he would only speak the right thing. He stood as if petrified by an unseen force, but the force was his own strong will.

“ Well, Adam,” said Arthur, “ you have been looking at

the fine old beeches, eh? They're not to be come near by the hatchet, though; this is a sacred grove. I overtook pretty little Hetty Sorrel as I was coming to my den—the Hermitage there. She ought not to come home this way so late. So I took care of her to the gate, and asked for a kiss for my pains. But I must get back now, for this road is confoundedly damp. Good-night, Adam; I shall see you to-morrow—to say good-by, you know."

Arthur was too much preoccupied with the part he was playing himself to be thoroughly aware of the expression in Adam's face. He did not look directly at Adam, but glanced carelessly round at the trees, and then lifted up one foot to look at the sole of his boot. He cared to say no more; he had thrown quite dust enough into honest Adam's eyes; and, as he spoke the last words, he walked on.

"Stop a ! it sir," said Adam, in a hard, peremptory voice, without turning round. "I've got a word to say to you."

Arthur paused in surprise. Susceptible persons are more affected by a change of tone than by unexpected words, and Arthur had the susceptibility of a nature at once affectionate and vain. He was still more surprised when he saw that Adam had not moved, but stood with his back to him, as if summoning him to return. What did he mean? He was going to make a serious business of this affair. Confound the fellow! Arthur felt his temper rising. A patronizing disposition always has its meaner side, and in the confusion of his irritation and alarm there entered the feeling that a man to whom he had shown so much favor as to Adam was not in a position to criticize his conduct. And yet he was dominated, as one who feels himself in the wrong always is, by the man whose good opinion he cares for. In spite of pride and temper, there was as much deprecation as anger in his voice when he said,

"What do you mean, Adam?"

"I mean, sir," answered Adam, in the same harsh voice, still without turning round, "I mean, sir, that you don't deceive me by your light words. This is not the first time you've met Hetty Sorrel in this grove, and this is not the first time you've kissed her."

Arthur felt a startled uncertainty how far Adam was speaking from knowledge and how far from mere inference. And this uncertainty, which prevented him from contriving a prudent answer, heightened his irritation. He said, in a high, sharp tone,

"Well, sir, what then?"

"Why, then, instead of acting like th' upright, honorable man we've all believed you to be, you've been acting the part of a selfish, light-minded scoundrel. You know, as well as I do, what it's to lead to, when a gentleman like you kisses and makes love to a young woman like Hetty, and gives her presents as she's frightened for other folks to see. And I say it again, you're acting the part of a selfish, light-minded scoundrel, though it cuts me to th' heart to say so, and I'd rather ha' lost my right hand."

"Let me tell you, Adam," said Arthur, bridling his growing anger, and trying to recur to his careless tone, "you're not only devilishly impertinent, but you're talking nonsense. Every pretty girl is not such a fool as you, to suppose that when a gentleman admires her beauty, and pays her a little attention, he must mean something particular. Every man likes to flirt with a pretty girl, and every pretty girl likes to be flirted with. The wider the distance between them the less harm there is, for then she's not likely to deceive herself."

"I don't know what you mean by flirting," said Adam, "but if you mean behaving to a woman as if you loved her, and yet not loving her all the while, I say that's not th' action of an honest man, and what isn't honest does come t' harm. I'm not a fool, and you're not a fool, and you know better than what you're saying. You know it couldn't be made public as you've behaved to Hetty as y' have done, without her losing her character, and bringing shame and trouble on her and her relations. What if you meant nothing by your kissing and your presents? Other folks won't believe as you've meant nothing; and don't tell me about her not deceiving herself. I tell you as you've filled her mind so with the thought of you as it'll mayhap poison her life; and she'll never love another man as 'ud make her a good husband."

Arthur had felt a sudden relief while Adam was speaking; he perceived that Adam had no positive knowledge of the past, and that there was no irrevocable damage done by this evening's unfortunate rencontre. Adam could still be deceived. The candid Arthur had brought himself into a position in which successful lying was his only hope. The hope allayed his anger a little.

"Well, Adam," he said, in a tone of friendly concession, "you're perhaps right. Perhaps I've gone a little too far in taking notice of the pretty little thing, and stealing a kiss now and then. You're such a grave, steady fellow, you don't understand the temptation to such trifling. I'm sure I wouldn't

bring any trouble or annoyance on her and the good Poyzers on any account if I could help it. But I think you look a little too seriously at it. You know I'm going away immediately, so I shan't make any more mistakes of the kind. But let us say good-night"—Arthur here turned round to walk on—"and talk no more about the matter. The whole thing will soon be forgotten."

"No, by God!" Adam burst out, with rage that could be controlled no longer, throwing down the basket of tools, and striding forward till he was right in front of Arthur. All his jealousy and sense of personal injury, which he had been hitherto trying to keep under, had leaped up and mastered him. What man of us, in the first moments of a sharp agony, could ever feel that the fellow-man who has been the medium of inflicting it did not mean to hurt us? In our instinctive rebellion against pain we are children again, and demand an active will to wreak our vengeance on. Adam at this moment could only feel that he had been robbed of Hetty—robbed treacherously by the man in whom he had trusted; and he stood close in front of Arthur, with fierce eyes glaring at him, with pale lips and clenched hands, the hard tones in which he had hitherto been constraining himself to express no more than a just indignation, giving way to a deep agitated voice that seemed to shake him as he spoke.

"No, it'll not be soon forgot, as you've come in between her and me, when she might ha' loved me—it'll not soon be forgot, as you've robbed me o' my happiness, while I thought you was my best friend, and a noble-minded man, as I was proud to work for. And you've been kissing her, and meaning nothing, have you? And I never kissed her i' my life, but I'd ha' worked hard for years for the right to kiss her. And you make light of it. You think little o' doing what may damage other folks, so as you get your bit o' trifling, as means nothing. I throw back your favors, for you're not the man I took you for. I'll never count you my friend any more. I'd rather you'd act as my enemy, and fight me where I stand—it's all th' amends you can make me."

Poor Adam, possessed by rage that could find no other vent, began to throw off his coat and his cap, too blind with passion to notice the change that had taken place in Arthur while he was speaking. Arthur's lips were now as pale as Adam's; his heart was beating violently. The discovery that Adam loved Hetty was a shock which made him for the moment see himself in the light of Adam's indignation, and re

gard Adam's suffering as not merely a consequence, but an element of his error. The words of hatred and contempt—the first he had ever heard in his life—seemed like scorching missiles that were making ineffaceable scars on him. All screening self-excuse, which rarely falls quite away while others respect us, forsook him for an instant, and he stood face to face with the first great irrevocable evil he had ever committed. He was only twenty-one—and three months ago—nay, much later—he had thought proudly that no man should ever be able to reproach him justly. His first impulse, if there had been time for it, would perhaps have been to utter words of propitiation; but Adam had no sooner thrown off his coat and cap than he became aware that Arthur was standing pale and motionless, with his hands still thrust in his waistcoat pockets.

"What!" he said, "won't you fight me like a man? You know I won't strike you while you stand so."

"Go away, Adam," said Arthur, "I don't want to fight you."

"No," said Adam, bitterly, "you don't want to fight me; you think I'm a common man, as you can injure without answering for it."

"I never meant to injure you," said Arthur, with returning anger. "I didn't know you loved her."

"But you've made her love *you*," said Adam. "You're a double-faced man—I'll never believe a word you say again."

"Go away, I tell you," said Arthur, angrily, "or we shall both repent."

"No," said Adam, with a convulsed voice, "I swear I won't go away without fighting you. Do you want provoking any more? I tell you you're a coward and a scoundrel, and I despise you."

The color had all rushed back to Arthur's face; in a moment his white right hand was clenched, and dealt a blow like lightning, which sent Adam staggering backward. His blood was as thoroughly up as Adam's now, and the two men, forgetting the emotions that had gone before, fought with the instinctive fierceness of panthers in the deepening twilight darkened by the trees. The delicate-handed gentleman was a match for the workman in everything but strength, and Arthur's skill in parrying enabled him to protract the struggle for some long moments. But, between unarmed men, the battle is to the strong, where the strong is no blunderer, and Arthur must sink under a well-planned blow of Adam's as a steel rod is broken by an iron bar. The blow soon came,

and Arthur fell, his head lying concealed in a tuft of fern, so that Adam could only discern his darkly-clad body.

He stood still in the dim light, waiting for Arthur to rise. The blow had been given now, toward which he had been straining all the force of nerve and muscle—and what was the good of it? What had he done by fighting? Only satisfied his own passion, only wreaked his own vengeance. He had not rescued Hetty, not changed the past—there it was, just as it had been; and he sickened at the vanity of his own rage.

But why did not Arthur rise? He was perfectly motionless, and the time seemed long to Adam. . . . Good God! had the blow been too much for him? Adam shuddered at the thought of his own strength, as with the oncoming of this dread he knelt down by Arthur's side and lifted his head from among the fern. There was no sign of life; the eyes and teeth were set. The horror that rushed over Adam completely mastered him, and forced upon him his own belief. He could feel nothing but that death was in Arthur's face, and that he was helpless before it. He made not a single movement, but knelt like an image of despair gazing at an image of death.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DILEMMA.

It was only a few minutes measured by the clock—though Adam always thought it had been a long while—before he perceived a gleam of consciousness in Arthur's face and a slight shiver through his frame. The intense joy that flooded his soul brought back some of the old affection with it.

"Do you feel any pain, sir?" he said, tenderly, loosening Arthur's cravat.

Arthur turned his eyes on Adam with a vague stare which gave way to a slightly startled motion, as if from the shock of returning memory. But he only shivered again, and said nothing.

"Do you feel any hurt, sir?" Adam said again, with a trembling in his voice.

Arthur put his hand up to his waistcoat buttons, and when

Adam had unbuttoned it, he took a longer breath. "Lay my head down," he said, faintly, "and get me some water, if you can."

Adam laid the head down gently on the fern again, and, emptying the tools out of the flag basket, hurried through the trees to the edge of the grove bordering on the Chase, where a brook ran below the bank.

When he returned with his basket leaking, but still half full, Arthur looked at him with a more thoroughly reawakened consciousness.

"Can you drink a drop out o' your hand, sir?" said Adam, keeling down again to lift up Arthur's head.

"No," said Arthur, "dip my cravat in and souse it on my head."

The water seemed to do him some good, for he presently raised himself a little higher, resting on Adam's arm.

"Do you feel any hurt inside, sir?" Adam asked again.

"No—no hurt," said Arthur, still faintly, "but rather done up."

After a while he said, "I suppose I fainted away when you knocked me down."

"Yes, sir, thank God," said Adam. "I thought it was worse."

"What! you thought you'd done for me, eh? come, help me on my legs."

"I feel terribly shaky and dizzy," Arthur said, as he stood leaning on Adam's arm; "that blow of yours must have come against me like a battering-ram. I don't believe I can walk alone."

"Lean on me, sir; I'll get you along," said Adam. "Or, will you sit down a bit longer, on my coat here? and I'll prop y' up. You'll perhaps be better in a minute or two."

"No," said Arthur. "I'll go to the Hermitage—I think I've got some brandy there. There's a short road to it a little farther on, near the gate. If you'll just help me on."

They walked slowly, with frequent pauses, but without speaking again. In both of them the concentration in the present which had attended the first moments of Arthur's revival had now given way to a vivid recollection of the previous scene. It was nearly dark in the narrow path among the trees, but within the circle of fir-trees round the Hermitage there was room for the growing moonlight to enter in at the windows. Their steps were noiseless on the thick carpet of fir needles, and the outward stillness seemed to heighten their

inward consciousness as Arthur took the key out of his pocket and placed it in Adam's hand for him to open the door. Adam had not known before that Arthur had furnished the old Hermitage and made it a retreat for himself, and it was a surprise to him, when he opened the door, to see a snug room with all the signs of frequent habitation.

Arthur loosed Adam's arm and threw himself on the ottoman. "You'll see my hunting-bottle somewhere," he said. "A leather case with a bottle and glass in."

Adam was not long in finding the case. "There's very little brandy in it, sir," he said, turning it downward over the glass, as he held it before the window, "hardly this little glassful."

"Well, give me that," said Arthur, with the peevishness of physical depression. When he had taken some sips, Adam said, "Hadn't I better run to th' house, sir, and get some more brandy? I can be there and back pretty soon. It'll be a stiff walk home for you, if you don't have something to revive you."

"Yes—go. But don't say I'm ill. Ask for my man Pym, and tell him to get it from Mills, and not to say I'm at the Hermitage. Get some water too."

Adam was relieved to have an active task—both of them were relieved to be apart from each other for a short time. But Adam's swift pace could not still the eager pain of thinking—of living again with concentrated suffering through the last wretched hour, and looking out from it over all the new, sad future.

Arthur lay still for some minutes after Adam was gone, but presently he rose feebly from the ottoman and peered about slowly in the broken moonlight, seeking something. It was a short bit of wax candle that stood among a confusion of writing and drawing materials. There was more searching for the means of lighting the candle, and when that was done he went cautiously round the room, as if wishing to assure himself of the presence or absence of something. At last he had found a slight thing, which he put first in his pocket, and then, on a second thought, took out again and thrust deep down into a waste-paper basket. It was a woman's little pink silk neckerchief. He set the candle on the table and threw himself down on the ottoman again, exhausted with the effort.

When Adam came back with his supplies, his entrance awoke Arthur from a doze.

"That's right," Arthur said ; "I'm tremendously in want of some brandy vigor."

"I'm glad to see you've got a light, sir," remarked Adam. "I've been thinking I'd better have asked for a lantern."

"No, no ; the candle will last long enough—I shall soon be up to walking home now."

"I can't go before I've seen you safe home, sir," said Adam, hesitatingly.

"No ; it will be better for you to stay—sit down."

Adam sat down, and they remained opposite to each other in uneasy silence, while Arthur slowly drank brandy-and-water, with visibly renovating effect. He began to lie in a more voluntary position, and looked as if he were less overpowered by bodily sensations. Adam was keenly alive to these indications, and as his anxiety about Arthur's condition begun to be allayed, he felt more of that impatience which every one knows who has had his just indignations suspended by the physical state of the culprit. Yet there was one thing on his mind to be done before he could recur to remonstrance ; it was to confess what had been unjust in his own words. Perhaps he longed all the more to make this confession, that his indignation might be free again ; and as he saw the signs of returning ease in Arthur, the words again and again came to his lips and went back, checked by the thought that it would be better to leave everything till to-morrow. As long as they were silent they did not look at each other, and a foreboding came across Adam that if they began to speak as though they remembered the past—if they looked at each other with full recognition—they must take fire again. So they sat in silence till the bit of wax candle flickered low in the socket ; the silence all the while becoming more irksome to Adam. Arthur had just poured out some more brandy-and-water, and he threw one arm behind his head and drew up one leg in an attitude of recovered ease, which was an irresistible temptation to Adam to speak what was on his mind.

"You begin to feel more yourself again, sir," he said, as the candle went out ; and they were half hidden from each other in the faint moonlight.

"Yes ; I don't feel good for much—very lazy, and not inclined to move ; but I'll go home when I've taken this dose."

There was a slight pause before Adam said,

"My temper got the better of me, and I said things as wasn't true. I'd no right to speak as if you'd known you was

doing me an injury ; you'd no grounds for knowing it ; I've always kept what I felt for her as secret as I could."

He paused again before he went on.

"And perhaps I judged you too harsh—I'm apt to be harsh ; and you may have acted out o' thoughtlessness more than I should ha' believed was possible for a man with a heart and a conscience. We're not all put together alike, and we may misjudge one another. God knows, it's all the joy I could have now, to think the best of you."

Arthur wanted to go home without saying any more—he was too painfully embarrassed in mind, as well as too weak in body, to wish for any farther explanation to-night. And yet it was a relief to him that Adam reopened the subject in a way the least difficult for him to answer. Arthur was in the wretched position of an open, generous man, who has committed an error which makes deception seem a necessity. The native impulse to give truth in return for truth, to meet trust with frank confession, must be suppressed, and duty was become a question of tactics. His deed was reacting upon him—was already governing him tyrannously, and forcing him into a course that jarred with his habitual feelings. The only aim that seemed admissible to him now was to deceive Adam to the utmost ; to make Adam think better of him than he deserved. And when he heard the words of honest retractation—when he heard the sad appeal with which Adam ended—he was obliged to rejoice in the remains of ignorant confidence it implied. He did not answer immediately, for he had to be judicious, and not truthful.

"Say no more about our anger, Adam," he said, at last, very languidly, for the labor of speech was unwelcome to him ; "I forgive your momentary injustice—it was quite natural, with the exaggerated notions you had in your mind. We shall be none the worse friends in future, I hope, because we've fought ; you had the best of it, and that was as it should be, for I believe I've been most in the wrong of the two. Come, let us shake hands."

Arthur held out his hand, but Adam sat still.

"I don't like to say 'No' to that, sir," he said, "but I can't shake hands till it's clear what we mean by't. I was wrong when I spoke as if you'd done me an injury knowingly, but I wasn't wrong in what I said before about your behavior t' Hetty, and I can't shake hands with you as if I held you my friend the same as ever till you've cleared that up better."

Arthur swallowed his pride and resentment as he drew back his hand. He was silent for some moments, and then said, as indifferently as he could,

"I don't know what you mean by clearing up, Adam. I've told you already that you think too seriously of a little flirtation. But if you are right in supposing there is any danger in it—I'm going away on Saturday, and there will be an end of it. As for the pain it has given you, I'm heartily sorry for it. I can say no more."

Adam said nothing, but rose from his chair, and stood with his face towards one of the windows, as if looking at the blackness of the moonlit fir trees; but he was in reality conscious of nothing but the conflict within him. It was of no use now—his resolution not to speak till to-morrow; he must speak there and then. But it was several minutes before he turned round and stepped near to Arthur, standing and looking down on him as he lay.

"It'll be better for me to speak plain," he said, with evident effort, "though it's hard work. You see, sir, this isn't a trifle to me, whatever it may be to you. I'm none o' them men as can go making love first to one woman, and then t' another, and don't think it much odds which of 'em I take. What I feel for Hetty's a different sort o' love, such as I believe nobody can know much about but them as feel it, and God as has given it to them. She's more nor everything else to me, all but my conscience and my good name. As if it's true what you've been saying all along—and if it's only been trifling and flirting, as you call it, as 'll be put an end to by your going away—why, then, I'd wait, and hope her heart 'ud turn to me after all. I'm loath to think you'd speak false to me, and I'll believe your word however things may look."

"You would be wronging Hetty more than me not to believe it," said Arthur, almost violently, starting up from the ottoman, and moving away. But he threw himself into a chair again directly, saying more feebly, "You seem to forget that, in suspecting me, you are casting imputations upon her."

"Nay, sir," Adam said in a calmer voice, as if he were half relieved—for he was too straightforward to make a distinction between a falsehood and an indirect one—"Nay, sir, things don't lie level between Hetty and you. You're acting with your eyes open, whatever you may do; but how do you know what's been in her mind? She's all but a child—as any man with a conscience in him ought to feel bound

to take care on. And whatever you may think, I know you've disturbed her mind. I know she's been fixing her heart on you; for there's a many things clear to me now as I didn't understand before. But you seem to make light o' what *she* may feel—you don't think o' that."

"Good God, Adam, let me alone!" Arthur burst out impetuously; "I feel it enough without you worrying me."

He was aware of his indiscretion as soon as the words had escaped him.

"Well, then, if you feel it," Adam rejoined, eagerly; "if you feel as you may ha' put false notions into her mind, and made her believe as you loved her, when all the while you mean nothing, I've this demand to make of you—I'm not speaking for myself, but for her. I ask you t' undeceive her before you go away. Y'arn't going away forever; and, if you leave her behind with a notion in her head o' your feeling about her the same as she feels about you, she'll be hankering after you, and the mischief may get worse. It may be a smart to her now, but it'll save her pain i' th' end. I ask you to write a letter—you may trust to my seeing as she gets it: tell her the truth, and take blame to yourself for behaving as you'd no right to do to a young woman as isn't your equal. I speak plain, sir. But I can't speak any other way. There's nobody can take care o' Hetty in this thing but me."

"I can do what I think needful in the matter," said Arthur, more and more irritated by mingled distress and perplexity, "without giving promises to you. I shall take what measures I think proper."

"No," said Adam, in an abrupt decided tone, "that won't do. I must know what ground I'm treading on. I must be safe as you've put an end to what ought never to ha' been begun. I don't forget what's owing to you as a gentleman; but in this thing we're man and man, and I can't give up."

There was no answer for some moments. Then Arthur said, "I'll see you to-morrow. I can bear no more now; I'm ill." He rose as he spoke, and reached his cap, as if intending to go.

"You won't see her again!" Adam exclaimed, with a flash of recurring anger and suspicion, moving towards the door and placing his back against it. "Either tell me she can never be my wife—tell me you've been lying—or else promise me what I've said."

Adam, uttering this alternative, stood like a terrible fate

before Arthur, who had moved forward a step or two, and now stopped, faint, shaken, sick in mind and body. It seemed long to both of them—that inward struggle of Arthur's before he said, feebly, "I promise ; let me go."

Adam moved away from the door and opened it, but when Arthur reached the step he stopped again and leaned against the door-post.

"You're not well enough to walk alone, sir," said Adam. "Take my arm again."

Arthur made no answer, and presently walked on, Adam following. But after a few steps he stood still again, and said coldly, "I believe I must trouble you. It's getting late now, and there may be an alarm set up about me at home."

Adam gave his arm, and they walked on without uttering a word, till they came where the basket and the tools lay.

"I must pick up the tools, sir," Adam said. "They're my brother's. I doubt they'll be rusted. If you'll please to wait a minute."

Arthur stood still without speaking, and no other word passed between them till they were at the side entrance, where he hoped to get in without being seen by any one. He said then, "Thank you ; I needn't trouble you any farther."

"What time will it be conven'ent for me to see you to-morrow, sir?" said Adam.

"You may send me word that you're here at five o'clock," said Arthur ; "not before."

"Good-night, sir," said Adam. But he heard no reply. Arthur had turned into the house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE NEXT MORNING.

ARTHUR did not pass a sleepless night ; he slept long and well ; for sleep comes to the perplexed—if the perplexed are only weary enough. But at seven he rang his bell and astonished Pym by declaring he was going to get up, and must have breakfast brought to him at eight.

"And see that my mare is saddled at half-past eight, and tell my grandfather when he's down that I'm better this morning, and am gone for a ride."

He had been awake an hour, and could rest in bed no longer. In bed our yesterdays are too oppressive ; if a man can only get up, though it be but to whistle or to smoke, he has a present which offers some resistance to the past—sensations which assert themselves against tyrannous memories. And if there were such a thing as taking averages of feeling, it would certainly be found that in the hunting and shooting seasons regrets, self-reproach, and mortified pride, weigh lighter on country gentlemen than in late spring and summer. Arthur felt that he should be more of a man on horseback. Even the presence of Pym, waiting on him with the usual deference, was a reassurance to him after the scenes of yesterday ; for, with Arthur's sensitiveness to opinion, the loss of Adam's respect was a shock to his self-contentment which suffused his imagination with the sense that he had sunk in all eyes ; as a sudden shock of fear from some real peril makes a nervous woman afraid even to step, because all her preceptions are suffused with a sense of danger.

Arthur's, as you know, was a loving nature. Deeds of kindness were as easy to him as a bad habit ; they were the common issue of his weaknesses and good qualities, of his egotism and his sympathy. He didn't like to witness pain, and he liked to have grateful eyes beaming on him as the giver of pleasure. When he was a lad of seven, he one day kicked down an old gardener's pitcher of broth, from no motive but a kicking impulse, not reflecting that it was the old man's dinner ; but on learning that sad fact, he took his favorite pencil-case and a silver-hafted knife out of his pocket and offered them as compensation. He had been the same Arthur ever since, trying to make all offences forgotten in benefits. If there were any bitterness in his nature, it could only show itself against the man who refused to be conciliated by him. And perhaps the time was come for some of that bitterness to rise. At the first moment, Arthur had felt pure distress and self-reproach at discovering that Adam's happiness was involved in his relation to Hetty ; if there had been a possibility of making Adam tenfold amends—if deeds of gift, or any other deeds, could have restored Adam's contentment and regard for him as a benefactor, Arthur would not only have executed them without hesitation, but would have felt bound all the more closely to Adam, and would never have been weary of making retribution. But Adam could receive no amends ; his suffering could not be cancelled ; his respect and affection could not be recovered by any prompt deeds of

atonement. He stood like an immovable obstacle against which no pressure could avail ; an embodiment of what Arthur most shrank from believing in—the irrevocableness of his own wrong doing. The words of scorn, the refusal to shake hands, the mastery asserted over him in their last conversation in the Hermitage—above all, the sense of having been knocked down, to which a man does not very well reconcile himself, even under the most heroic circumstances—pressed on him with a galling pain which was stronger than compunction. Arthur would so gladly have persuaded himself that he had done no harm ! And if no one had told him the contrary, he could have persuaded himself so much better. Nemesis can seldom forge a sword for herself out of our consciences—out of the suffering we feel in the suffering we may have caused ; there is rarely metal enough there to make an effective weapon. Our moral sense learns the manners of good society, and smiles when others smile ; but when some rude person gives rough names to our actions, she is apt to take part against us. And so it was with Arthur ; Adam's judgment of him, Adam's grating words, disturbed his self-soothing arguments.

Not that Arthur had been at ease before Adam's discovery. Struggles and resolves had transformed themselves into compunction and anxiety. He was distressed for Hetty's sake, and distressed for his own, that he must leave her behind. He had always, both in making and breaking resolutions, looked beyond his passion, and seen that it must speedily end in separation ; but his nature was too ardent and tender for him not to suffer at this parting ; and on Hetty's account he was filled with uneasiness. He had found out the dream in which she was living—she was to be a lady in silks and satins ; and when he had first talked to her about his going away, she had asked him tremblingly to let her go with him and be married. It was his painful knowledge of this which had given the most exasperating sting to Adam's reproaches. He had said no word with the purpose of deceiving her, her vision was all spun by her own childish fancy ; but he was obliged to confess to himself that it was spun half out of his own actions. And to increase the mischief, on this last evening he had not dared to hint the truth to Hetty ; he had been obliged to soothe her with tender, hopeful words, lest he should throw her into violent distress. He felt the situation acutely ; felt the sorrow of the dear thing in the present, and thought with a darker anxiety of the tenacity

which her feelings might have in the future. That was the one sharp point which pressed against him; every other he could evade by hopeful self-persuasion. The whole thing had been secret; the Poysers had not the shadow of a suspicion. No one except Adam knew anything of what had passed—no one else was likely to know; for Arthur had impressed on Hetty that it would be fatal to betray, by word or look, that there had been the least intimacy between them; and Adam who knew half their secret, would rather help them to keep it than betray it. It was an unfortunate business altogether, but there was no use in making it worse than it was, by imaginary exaggerations and forebodings of evil that might never come. The temporary sadness for Hetty was the worst consequence: he resolutely turned his eyes away from any bad consequence that was not demonstrably inevitable. But—but Hetty might have had the trouble in some other way if not in this. And, perhaps, hereafter he might be able to do a great deal for her, and make up to her for all the tears she would shed about him. She would owe the advantage of his care for her in future years to the sorrow she had incurred now. *So good comes out of evil.* Such is the beautiful arrangement of things!

Are you inclined to ask whether this can be the same Arthur who, two months ago, had that freshness of feeling, that delicate honor which shrinks from wounding even a sentiment, and does not contemplate any more positive offense as possible for it?—who thought that his own self-respect was a higher tribunal than any external opinion? The same, I assure you; only under different conditions. Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds; and until we know what has been or will be the peculiar combination of outward with inward facts, which constitute a man's critical actions, it will be better not to think ourselves wise about his character. There is a terrible coercion in our deeds which may at first turn the honest man into a deceiver, and then reconcile him to the change; for this reason—that the second wrong presents itself to him in the guise of the only practicable right. The action which before commission has been seen with that blended common sense and fresh untarnished feeling which is the healthy eye of the soul is looked at afterward with the lens of apologetic ingenuity, through which all things that men call beautiful and ugly are seen to be made up of textures very much alike. Europe adjusts itself to a *fait accompli*, and so does an individual character—until the placid adjustment is disturbed by a convulsive retribution.

No man can escape this vitiating effect of an offence against his own sentiment of right, and the effect was the stronger in Arthur because of that very need of self-respect which, while his conscience was still at ease, was one of his best safeguards. Self-accusation was too painful to him—he could not face it. He must persuade himself that he had not been very much to blame; he began even to pity himself for the necessity he was under of deceiving Adam; it was a course so opposed to the honesty of his own nature. But then it was the only right thing to do.

Well, whatever had been amiss in him, he was miserable enough in consequence; miserable about Hetty; miserable about this letter that he had promised to write, and that seemed at one moment to be a gross barbarity, at another perhaps the greatest kindness he could do to her. And across all this reflection would dart every now and then a sudden impulse of passionate defiance toward all consequences; he would carry Hetty away, and all other considerations might go to. . . .

In this state of mind the four walls of his room made an intolerable prison to him; they seemed to hem in and press down upon him all the crowd of contradictory thoughts and conflicting feelings, some of which would fly away in the open air. He had only an hour or two to make up his mind in, and he must get clear and calm. Once on Meg's back, in the fresh air of that fine morning, he should be more master of the situation.

The pretty creature arched her bay neck in the sunshine, and pawed the gravel, and trembled with pleasure when her master stroked her nose, and patted her, and talked to her even in a more caressing manner than usual. He loved her the better because she knew nothing of his secrets. But Meg was quite as well acquainted with her master's mental state as many others of her sex with the mental condition of the nice young gentleman toward whom their hearts are in a state of fluttering expectation.

Arthur cantered for five miles beyond the Chase, till he was at the foot of a hill where there were no hedges or trees to hem in the road. Then he threw the bridle on Meg's neck, and prepared to make up his mind.

Hetty knew that their meeting yesterday must be the last before Arthur went away; there was no possibility of their contriving another without exciting suspicion; and she was like a frightened child, unable to think of anything, only

able to cry at the mention of parting, and then put her face up to have the tears kissed away. He *could* do nothing but comfort her, and lull her into dreaming on. A letter would be a dreadfully abrupt way of awakening her! Yet there was truth in what Adam said—that it would save her from a lengthened delusion, which might be worse than a sharp immediate pain. And it was the only way of satisfying Adam, who *must* be satisfied for more reasons than one. If he could have seen her again! But that was impossible; there was such a thorny hedge of hindrances between them, and imprudence would be fatal. And yet if he *could* see her again, what good would it do? Only cause him to suffer more from the sight of her distress and the remembrance of it. Away from him, she was surrounded by all the motives to self-control.

A sudden dread here fell like a shadow across his imagination—the dread lest she should do something violent in her grief; and close upon that dread came another, which deepened the shadow. But he shook them off with the force of youth and hope. What was the ground for painting the future in that dark way? It was just as likely to be the reverse. Arthur told himself, he did not deserve that things should turn out so badly—he had never meant beforehand to do anything his conscience disapproved—he had been led on by circumstances. There was a sort of implicit confidence in him that he was really such a good fellow at bottom, Providence would not treat him harshly.

At all events, he couldn't help what would come now; all he could do was to take what seemed to be the best course at the present moment. And he persuaded himself that that course was to make the way open between Adam and Hetty. Her heart might really turn to Adam, as he said, after a while; and in that case there would have been no great harm done, since it was still Adam's ardent wish to make her his wife. To be sure, Adam was deceived—deceived in a way that Arthur would have resented as a deep wrong if it had been practiced on himself. That was a reflection that marred the consoling prospect. Arthur's cheeks even burned in mingled shame and irritation at the thought. But what could a man do in such a dilemma? He was bound in honor to say no word that could injure Hetty; his first duty was to guard *her*. He would never have told or acted a lie on his own account. Good God! what a miserable fool he was to have brought himself into such a dilemma; and yet if ever

a man had excuses, he had. (Pity that consequences are determined not by excuses but by actions !)

Well, the letter must be written ; it was the only means that promised a solution of the difficulty. The tears came into Arthur's eyes as he thought of Hetty reading it ; but it would be almost as hard for him to write it ; he was not doing anything easy to himself, and this last thought helped him to arrive at a conclusion. He could never deliberately have taken a step which inflicted pain on another and left himself at ease. Even a movement of jealousy at the thought of giving up Hetty to Adam, went to convince him that he was making a sacrifice.

When once he had come to this conclusion, he turned Meg round, and set off home again in a canter. The letter should be written the first thing, and the rest of the day would be filled up with other business ; he should have no time to look behind him. Happily, Irwine and Gawaine were coming to dinner, and by twelve o'clock the next day he should have left the Chase miles behind him. There was some security in this constant occupation against an uncontrollable impulse seizing him to rush to Hetty, and thrust in her hand some mad proposition that would undo everything. Faster and faster went the sensitive Meg, at every slight sign from her rider, till the canter had passed into a swift gallop.

"I thought they said th' young mester war took ill last night," said sour old John, the groom, at dinner-time in the servants' hall. "He's been ridin' fit to split the mare i' two this forenoon."

"That's happen one o' the symptoms, John," said the facetious coachman.

"Then I wish he war let blood for 't, that's all," said John, grimly.

Adam had been early at the Chase to know how Arthur was, and had been relieved from all anxiety about the effects of his blow by learning that he was gone out for a ride. At five o'clock he was punctually there again, and set up word of his arrival. In a few minutes Pym came down with a letter in his hand, and gave it to Adam, saying that the captain was too busy to see him, and had written everything he had to say. The letter was directed to Adam, but he went out of doors again before opening it. It contained a sealed inclosure directed to Hetty. On the inside of the cover Adam read :

"In the inclosed letter I have written everything you wish.

I leave it to you to decide whether you will be doing best to deliver it to Hetty or to return it to me. Ask yourself once more whether you are not taking a measure which may pain her more than mere silence.

"There is no need for our seeing each other again now. We shall meet with better feelings some months hence.

"A. D."

"Perhaps he's i' th' right on't not to see me," thought Adam. "It's no use meeting to say more hard words, and it's no use meeting to shake hands and say we're friends again. We're not friends, an' it's better not to pretend it. I know forgiveness is a man's duty, but to my thinking, that can only mean as you're to give up all thoughts o' taking revenge; it can never mean as you're t' have your old feelings back again, for that's not possible. He's not the same man to me, and I can't *feel* the same toward him. God help me! I don't know whether I feel the same toward anybody; I seem as if I'd been measuring my work from a false line, and had got it all to measure o'er again."

But the question about delivering the letter to Hetty soon absorbed Adam's thoughts. Arthur had procured some relief to himself by throwing the decision on Adam with a warning; and Adam, who was not given to hesitation, hesitated here. He determined to feel his way—to ascertain as well as he could what was Hetty's state of mind before he decided on delivering the letter.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE DELIVERY OF THE LETTER.

THE next Sunday Adam joined the Poysers on their way out of church, hoping for an invitation to go home with them. He had the letter in his pocket, and was anxious to have an opportunity of talking to Hetty alone. He could not see her face at church, for she had changed her seat, and when he came up to her to shake hands, her manner was doubtful and constrained. He expected this, for it was the first time she had met him since she had been aware that he had seen her with Arthur in the Grove.

"Come, you'll go on wi' us, Adam," Mr. Poyser said, when they reached the turning ; and as soon as they were in the fields, Adam ventured to offer his arm to Hetty. The children soon gave them an opportunity of lingering behind a little, and then Adam said,

"Will you contrive for me to walk out in the garden a bit with you this evening, if it keeps fine, Hetty? I've something partic'lar to talk to you about."

Hetty said, "Very well." She was really as anxious as Adam was that she should have some private talk with him : she wondered what he thought of her and Arthur : he must have seen them kissing, she knew, but she had no conception of the scene that had taken place between Arthur and Adam. Her first feeling had been that Adam would be very angry with her, and perhaps would tell her aunt and uncle ; but it never entered her mind that he would dare to say anything to Captain Donnithorne. It was a relief to her that he behaved so kindly to her to-day, and wanted to speak to *her* alone ; for she had trembled when she found he was going home with them lest he should mean "to tell." But, now he wanted to talk to her by herself, she should learn what he thought, and what he meant to do. She felt a certain confidence that she could persuade him not to do anything she did not want him to do ; she could perhaps even make him believe that she didn't care for Arthur ; and as long as Adam thought there was any hope of her having him, he would do just what she liked, she knew. Besides, she *must* go on seeming to encourage Adam, lest her uncle and aunt should be angry, and suspect her of having some secret lover.

Hetty's little brain was busy with this combination as she hung on Adam's arm, and said "yes" or "no" to some slight observations of his about the many hawthorn-berries there would be for the birds this next winter, and the low-hanging clouds that would hardly hold up till morning. And when they rejoined her aunt and uncle, she could pursue her thoughts without interruption, for Mr. Poyser held that, though a young man might like to have the woman he was courting on his arm, he would nevertheless be glad of a little reasonable talk about business the while ; and, for his own part, he was curious to hear the most recent news about the Chase Farm. So, through the rest of the walk, he claimed Adam's conversation for himself ; and Hetty laid her small plots, and imagined her little scenes of cunning blandishment, as she walked along by the hedgerows on honest Adam's arm, quite

as well as if she had been an elegantly-clad coquette alone in her boudoir. For if a country beauty in clumsy shoes be only shallow-hearted enough, it is astonishing how closely her mental processes may resemble those of a lady in society and crinoline, who applies her refined intellect to the problem of committing indiscretions without compromising herself. Perhaps the resemblance was not much the less because Hetty felt very unhappy all the while. The parting with Arthur was a double pain to her; mingling with the tumult of passion and vanity, there was a dim undefined fear that the future might shape itself in some way quite unlike her dream. She clung to the comforting hopeful words Arthur had uttered in their last meeting—"I shall come again at Christmas, and then we will see what can be done." She clung to the belief that he was so fond of her, he would never be happy without her; and she still hugged her secret—that a great gentleman loved her—with gratified pride, as a superiority over all the girls she knew. But the uncertainty of the future, the possibilities to which she could give no shape, began to press upon her like the invisible weight of air; she was alone on her little island of dreams, and all round her was the dark unknown water where Arthur was gone. She could gather no elation of spirits now by looking forward, but only by looking backward to build confidence on past words and caresses. But occasionally, since Thursday evening, her dim anxieties had been almost lost behind the more definite fear that Adam might betray what he knew to her uncle and aunt, and his sudden proposition to talk with her alone had set her thoughts to work in a new way. She was eager not to lose this evening's opportunity; and after tea, when the boys were going into the garden, and Totty begged to go with them, Hetty said, with an alacrity that surprised Mrs. Poyser,

"I'll go with her, aunt."

It did not seem at all surprising that Adam said he would go too; and soon he and Hetty were left alone together on the walk by the filbert-trees, while the boys were busy elsewhere gathering the large unripe nuts to play at "cob-nut" with, and Totty was watching them with a puppy-like air of contemplation. It was but a short time—hardly two months—since Adam had had his mind filled with delicious hopes, as he stood by Hetty's side in this garden. The remembrance of that scene had often been with him since Thursday evening; the sunlight through the apple-tree boughs, the red bunches, Hetty's sweet blush. It came importunately now, on this sad

evening, with the low-hanging clouds ; but he tried to suppress it, lest some emotion should impel him to say more than was needful for Hetty's sake.

"After what I saw on Thursday night, Hetty," he began, "you won't think me making too free i' what I'm going to say. If you was being courted by any man as 'ud make y' his wife, and I'd known you was fond of him, and meant to have him, I should have no right to speak a word to you about it ; but when I see you're being made love to by a gentleman as can never marry you, and doesna think o' marrying you, I feel bound t' interfere for you. I cannot speak about it to them as are i' the place o' your parents, for that might bring worse trouble than's needful."

Adam's words relieved one of Hetty's fears, but they also carried a meaning which sickened her with a strengthened foreboding. She was pale and trembling, and yet she would have angrily contradicted Adam if she had dared to betray her feelings. But she was silent.

"You're so young, you know, Hetty," he went on, almost tenderly, "and y' haven't seen much o' what goes on in the world. It's right for me to do what I can to save you from getting into trouble for want o' your knowing where you're being led to. If anybody besides me knew what I know about your meeting a gentleman, and having fine presents from him, they'd speak light on you, and you'd lose your character ; and, besides that, you'll have to suffer in your feelings wi' giving your love to a man as can never marry you, so as he might take care of you all your life."

Adam paused, and looked at Hetty, who was plucking the leaves from the filbert-trees, and tearing them up in her hand. Her little plans and preconcerted speeches had all forsaken her, like an ill-learned lesson, under the terrible agitation produced by Adam's words. There was a cruel force in their calm certainty which threatened to grapple and crush her flimsy hopes and fancies. She wanted to resist them—she wanted to throw them off with angry contradiction ; but the determination to conceal what she felt still governed her. It was nothing more than a blind prompting now, for she was unable to calculate the effect of her words.

"You've no right to say as I love him," she said, faintly but impetuously, plucking another rough leaf and tearing it up. She was very beautiful in her paleness and agitation, with her dark childish eyes dilated, and her breath shorter than usual. Adam's heart yearned over her as he looked at

her. Ah! if he could but comfort her, and soothe her, and save her from this pain; if he had but some sort of strength that would enable him to rescue her poor troubled mind, as he would have rescued her body in the face of all danger!

"I doubt it must be so, Hetty," he said, tenderly; "for I canna believe you'd let any man kiss you by yourselves, and give you a gold box with his hair, and go a-walking i' the grove to meet him, if you didna love him. I'm not blaming you, for I know it 'ud begin by little and little, till at last you'd not be able to throw it off. It's him I blame for stealing your love i' that way, when he knew he could never make you the right amends. He's been trifling with you, and making a plaything of you, and caring nothing about you as a man ought to care."

"Yes he does care for me; I know better nor you," Hetty burst out. Everything was forgotten but the pain and anger she felt at Adam's words.

"Nay, Hetty," said Adam, "if he'd cared for you rightly he'd never ha' behaved so. He told me himself he meant nothing by his kissing and presents, and he wanted to make me believe as you thought light of 'e a too. But I know better nor that. I can't help thinking as you've been trusting t's loving you well enough to marry you, for all he's a gentleman. And that's why I must speak to you about it, Hetty—for fear you should be deceiving yourself. It's never entered his head, the thought o' marrying you.

"How do you know? How durst you say so?" said Hetty, pausing in her walk and trembling. The terrible decision of Adam's tone shook her with fear. She had no presence of mind left for the reflection that Arthur would have his reasons for not telling the truth to Adam. Her words and look were enough to determine Adam; he must give her the letter.

"You perhaps can't believe me, Hetty; because you think too well of him—because you think he loves you better than he does. But I've got a letter i' my pocket, as he wrote himself for me to give you. I've not read the letter, but he says he's told you the truth in it. But, before I give you the letter, consider, Hetty, and don't let it take too much hold on you. It wouldna ha' been good for you if he'd wanted to do such a mad thing as marry you: it 'ud ha' led to no happiness i' th' end."

Hetty said nothing: she felt a revival of hope at the mention of a letter which Adam had not read. There would be something quite different in it from what he thought.

Adam took out the letter, but he held it in his hand still, while he said, in a tone of tender entreaty,

"Don't you bear me ill-will, Hetty, because I'm the means o' bringing you this pain. God knows I'd ha' borne a good deal worse for the sake o' sparing it you. And think—there's nobody but me knows about this; and I'll take care of you as if I was your brother. You're the same as ever to me, for I don't believe you've done any wrong knowingly."

Hetty had laid her hand on the letter, but Adam did not loose it till he had done speaking. She took no notice of what he said—she had not listened; but when he loosed the letter she put it into her pocket, without opening it, and then began to walk more quickly, as if she wanted to go in.

"You're in the right not to read it just yet," said Adam. "Read it when you're by yourself. But stay out a little bit longer, and let us call the children: you look so white and ill; your aunt may take notice of it."

Hetty heard the warning. It recalled to her the necessity of rallying her native powers of concealment, which had half given way under the shock of Adam's words. And she had the letter in her pocket: she was sure there was comfort in that letter, in spite of Adam. She ran to find Totty, and soon reappeared with recovered color, leading Totty, who was making a sour face, because she had been obliged to throw away an unripe apple that she had set her small teeth in.

"Hegh, Totty," said Adam, "come and ride on my shoulder—ever so high—you'll touch the top o' the trees."

What little child ever refused to be comforted by that glorious sense of being seized strongly and swung upward? I don't believe Ganymede cried when the eagle carried him away, and perhaps deposited him on Jove's shoulder at the end. Totty smiled down complacently from her secure height, and pleasant was the sight to the mother's eyes, as she stood at the house door and saw Adam coming with his small burden.

"Bless your sweet face, my pet," she said, the mother's strong love filling her keen eyes with mildness, as Totty leaned forward and put out her arms. She had no eyes for Hetty at that moment, and only said, without looking at her, "You go and draw some ale, Hetty; the gells are both at the cheese."

After the ale had been drawn and her uncle's pipe lighted, there was Totty to be taken to bed, and brought down again in her night-gown, because she would cry instead of going to

sleep. Then there was supper to be got ready, and Hetty must be continually in the way to give help. Adam staid till he knew Mrs. Poyser expected him to go, engaging her and her husband in talk as constantly as he could, for the sake of leaving Hetty more at ease. He lingered, because he wanted to see her safely through that evening, and he was delighted to find how much self-command she showed. He knew she had not had time to read the letter, but he did not know she was buoyed up by a secret hope that the letter would contradict everything he had said. It was hard work for him to leave her—hard to think that he should not know for days how she was bearing her trouble. But he must go at last, and all he could do was to press her hand gently as he said “Good-by,” and hope she would take that as a sign that if his love could ever be a refuge for her, it was there the same as ever. How busy his thoughts were, as he walked home, in devising pitying excuses for her folly; in referring all her weakness to the sweet lovingness of her nature; in blaming Arthur, with less and less inclination to admit that *his* conduct might be extenuated too! His exasperation at Hetty’s suffering—and also at the sense that she was possibly thrust forever out of his own reach—deafened him to any plea for the miscalled friend who had wrought this misery. Adam was a clear-sighted, fair-minded man—a fine fellow, indeed, morally as well as physically. But if Aristides the Just was ever in love and jealous, he was at that moment not perfectly magnanimous. And I cannot pretend that Adam, in these painful days, felt nothing but righteous indignation and loving pity. He was bitterly jealous; and in proportion as his love made him indulgent in his judgment of Hetty, the bitterness found a vent in his feeling toward Arthur.

“Her head was allays likely to be turned,” he thought, “when a gentleman, with his fine manners and fine clothes, and his white hands, and that way o’ talking gentlefolks have, came about her, making up to her in a bold way, as a man couldn’t do that was only her equal; and it’s much if she’ll ever like a common man now.” He could not help drawing his own hands out of his pocket, and looking at them—at the hard palms and the broken finger nails. “I’m a roughish fellow, altogether; I don’t know, now I come to think on’t, what there is much for a woman to like about me; and yet I might ha’ got another wife easy enough, if I hadn’t set my heart on her. But it’s little matter what other women think about me, if she can’t love me. She might ha’ loved me, per-

haps, as likely as any other man—there's nobody hereabouts as I'm afraid of, if *he* hadn't come between us ; but now I shall belike be hateful to her because I'm so different to him. And yet there's no telling—she may turn round the other way, when she finds he's made light of her all the while. She may come to feel the vally of a man as 'ud be thankful to be bound to her all his life. But I must put up with it whichever way it is—I've only to be thankful it's been no worse ; I'm not th' only man that's got to do without much happiness i' this life. There's many a good bit o' work done with a sad heart. It's God's will, and that's enough for us ; we shouldn't know better how things ought to be than He does, I reckon, if we was to spend our lives i' puzzling. But it 'ud ha' gone near to spoil my work for me, if I'd seen her brought to sorrow and shame, and through the man as I've always been proud to think on. Since I've been spared that, I've no right to grumble. When a man's got his limbs whole he can bear a smart cut or two."

As Adam was getting over a stile at this point in his reflections, he perceived a man walking along the field before him. He knew it was Seth, returning from an evening preaching, and made haste to overtake him.

"I thought thee'dst be at home before me," he said, as Seth turned round to wait for him, "for I'm later than usual to-night."

"Well, I'm later, too, for I got into talk, after meeting, with John Barnes, who has lately professed himself in a state of perfection, and I'd a question to ask him about his experience. It's one o' them subjects that lead you further than y' expect—they don't lie along the straight road."

They walked along together in silence two or three minutes. Adam was not inclined to enter into the subtleties of religious experience, but he *was* inclined to interchange a word or two of brotherly affection and confidence with Seth. That was a rare impulse in him, much as the brothers loved each other. They hardly ever spoke of personal matters, or uttered more than an allusion to their family troubles. Adam was by nature reserved in all matters of feeling, and Seth felt a certain timidity toward his more practical brother.

"Seth, lad," Adam said, putting his arm on his brother's shoulder, "hast heard anything from Dinah Morris since she went away."

"Yes," said Seth. "She told me I might write her a word after a while, how we went on, and how mother bore up

under her trouble. So I wrote to her a fortnight ago, and told her about thee having a new employment, and how mother was more contented ; and last Wednesday, when I called at the post at Treddles'on, I found a letter from her. I think thee'dst perhaps like to read it ; but I didna say anything about it, because thee'st seemed so full of other things. It's quite easy t' read—she writes wonderful for a woman."

Seth had drawn the letter from his pocket and held it out to Adam, who said, as he took it,

"Ay, lad, I've got a tough load to carry just now—thee mustna take it ill if I'm a bit silenter and crustier nor usual. Trouble doesna make me care the less for thee. I know we shall stick together to the last."

"I take nought ill o' thee, Adam ; I know well enough what it means if thee't a bit short wi' me now and then."

"There's mother opening the door to look out for us," said Adam, as they mounted the slope. "She's been sitting i' the dark as usual. Well, Gyp, well ! art glad to see me ?"

Lisbeth went in again quickly and lighted a candle, for she had heard the welcome rustling of footsteps on the grass, before Gyp's joyful bark.

"Eh ! my lads, th' hours war ne'er so long sin' I war born as they'n been this blessed Sunday night. What can ye both ha' been doin' till this time ?"

"Thee shouldstna sit i' the dark, mother," said Adam, "that makes the time seem longer."

"Eh ! what am I t' do wi' burnin' candle of a Sunday, when there's on'y me, and it's sin to do a bit o' knittin' ? The daylight's long enough for me to stare i' th' booke as I canna read. It 'ud be a fine way o' shortenin' the time, to make it waste the good candle. But which on you's for ha'ing supper ? Ye mun ayther be clemmed or full, I should think, seein' what time o' night it is."

"I'm hungry, mother," said Seth, seating himself at the little table, which had been spread ever since it was light.

"I've had my supper," said Adam. "Here, Gyp," he added, taking some cold potato from the table, and rubbing the rough gray head that looked up toward him.

"Thee needsna be gi'in' th' dog," said Lisbeth ; "I'n fed him well a'ready. I'm not like to forget him, I reckon, when he's all o' thee I can get sight on."

"Come, then, Gyp," said Adam, "we'll go to bed. Good-night, mother ; I'm very tired."

"What ails him, dost know ?" Lisbeth said to Seth when

Adam was gone up stairs. "He's like as if he was struck for death this day or two—he's cast down. I found him i' the shop this forenoon, arter thee wast gone, a-sittin' doin' nothin'—not so much as a booke afore him."

"He's a deal o' work upon him just now, mother," said Seth, "and I think he's a bit troubled in his mind. Don't you take notice of it, because it hurts him when you do. Be as kind to him as you can, mother, and don't say anything to vex him."

"Eh! what dost talk o' my vexin' him? an' what am I like to be but kind? I'll ma' him a kettle-cake for breakfast i' the mornin'."

Adam had thrown off his coat and waistcoat, and was reading Dinah's letter by the light of his dip candle.

"DEAR BROTHER SETH,—Your letter lay three days beyond my knowing of it at the Post, for I had not money enough by me to pay the carriage, this being a time of great need and sickness here, with the rains that have fallen, as if the windows of heaven were opened again; and to lay by money from day to-day, in such a time, when there are so many in present need of all things, would be a want of trust like the laying up of the manna. I speak of this, because I would not have you think me slow to answer, or that I had small joy in your rejoicing at the worldly good that has befallen your brother Adam. The honor and love you bear him is nothing but meet, for God has given him great gifts, and he uses them as the patriarch Joseph did, who, when he was exalted to a place of power and trust, yet yearned with tenderness toward his parent and his younger brother.

"My heart is knit to your aged mother since it was granted me to be near her in the day of trouble. Speak to her of me, and tell her I often bear her in my thoughts at evening time, when I am sitting in the dim light as I did with her, and we held one another's hands, and I spoke the words of comfort that were given to me. Ah! that is a blessed time, isn't it, Seth, when the outward light is fading, and the body is a little wearied with its work and its labor? Then the inward light shines the brighter, and we have a deeper sense of resting on the Divine strength. I sit on my chair in the dark room and close my eyes, and it is as if I was out of the body and could feel no want for evermore. For then the very hardship, and the sorrow, and the blindness, and the sin I have beheld and been ready to weep over—yea, all the anguish of the children of men, which sometimes wraps me round like a sudden darkness—I can bear with a willing pain, as if I was sharing the Redeemer's cross. For I feel it, I feel it—Infinite Love is suffering too—yea, in the fullness of knowledge it suffers, it yearns, it mourns; and that is a blind self-seeking which wants to be freed from the sorrow wherewith the whole creation groaneth and travaileth. Surely it is

not true blessedness to be free from sorrow, while there is sorrow and sin in the world : sorrow is then a part of love, and love does not seek to throw it off. It is not the spirit only that tells me this—I see it in the whole work and word of the gospel. Is there not pleading in heaven? Is not the Man of Sorrows there in that crucified body wherewith he ascended? And is He not one with the Infinite Love itself—as our love is one with our sorrow?

“These thoughts have been much borne in on me of late, and I have seen with new clearness the meaning of those words, ‘If any man love me, let him take up my cross.’ I have heard this enlarged on as if it meant the troubles and persecutions we bring on ourselves by confessing Jesus. But surely that is a narrow thought. The true cross of the Redeemer was the sin and sorrow of this world—that was what lay heavy on his heart—and that is the cross we shall share with him, that is the cup we must drink of with him, if we would have any part in that Divine Love which is one with his sorrow.

“In my outward lot, which you ask about, I have all things and abound. I have had constant work in the mill, though some of the other hands have been turned off for a time; and my body is greatly strengthened, so that I feel little weariness after long walking and speaking. What you say about staying in your own country with your mother and brother shows me that you have a true guidance: your lot is appointed there by a clear showing, and to seek a greater blessing elsewhere would be like laying a false offering on the altar and expecting the fire from Heaven to kindle it. My work and my joy are here among the hills, and I sometimes think I cling too much to my life among the people here, and should be rebellious if I was called away.

“I was thankful for your tidings about the dear friends at the Hall Farm; for though I sent them a letter by my aunt’s desire, after I came back from my sojourn among them, I have had no word from them. My aunt has not the pen of a ready writer, and the work of the house is sufficient for the day, for she is weak in body. My heart cleaves to her and her children as the nearest of all to me in the flesh; yea, and to all in that house. I am carried away to them continually in my sleep, and often in the midst of work and even of speech, the thought of them is borne in on me as if they were in need and trouble, which yet is dark to me. There may be some leading here; but I wait to be taught. You say they are all well.

“We shall see each other again in the body, I trust—though, it may be, not for a long while; for the brethren and sisters at Leeds are desirous to have me for a short space among them, when I have a door opened me again to leave Snowfield.

“Farewell, dear brother—and yet not farewell. For those children of God whom it has been granted to see each other face to face and to hold communion together and to feel the same spirit working in both, can never more be sundered, though the hills may lie between. For their souls are enlarged forevermore by that

union, and they bear one another about in their thoughts continually as it were a new strength.

"Your faithful sister and fellow-worker in Christ,

"DINAH MORRIS.

"I have not skill to write the words so small as you do, and my pen moves slow. And so I am straitened, and say but little of what is in my mind. Greet your mother for me with a kiss. She asked me to kiss her twice when we parted."

Adam had refolded the letter, and was sitting meditatively with his head resting on his arm at the head of the bed, when Seth came up stairs.

"Hast read the letter?" said Seth.

"Yes," said Adam. "I don't know what I should ha thought of her and her letter if I'd never seen her: I daresay I should ha' thought a preaching woman hateful. But she's one as makes everything seem right she says and does, and I seemed to see her and hear her speaking when I read the letter. It's wonderful how I remember her looks and her voice. She'd make thee rare and happy, Seth; she's just the woman for thee."

"It's no use thinking o' that," said Seth, despondingly. "She spoke so firm, and she's not the woman to say one thing and mean another."

"Nay, but her feelings may grow different. A woman may get to love by degrees—the best fire doesna flare up the soonest. I'd have thee go and see her by and by: I'd make it convenient for thee to be away three or four days, and it 'ud be no walk for thee—only between twenty and thirty mile."

"I should like to see her again, whether or no, if she would na be displeased with me for going," said Seth.

"She'll be none displeased," said Adam, emphatically, getting up. "It might be a greater happiness to us all, if she'd have thee, for mother took to her so wonderful, and seemed so contented to be with her."

"Ay," said Seth, rather timidly, "and Dinah's fond o' Hetty too; she thinks a deal about her."

Adam made no reply to that, and, no other word but "good-night" passed between them.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN HETTY'S BEDCHAMBER.

It was no longer light enough to go to bed without a candle, even in Mrs. Poyser's early household, and Hetty carried one with her as she went up at last to her bedroom soon after Adam was gone, and bolted the door behind her.

Now she would read her letter. It must have comfort in it. How was Adam to know the truth? It was always likely he should say what he did say.

She set down the candle, and took the letter. It had a faint scent of roses, which made her feel as if Arthur were close to her. She put it to her lips, and a rush of remembered sensations for a moment or two swept away all fear. But her heart began to flutter strangely, and her hands to tremble as she broke the seal. She read slowly; it was not easy for her to read a gentleman's handwriting, though Arthur had taken pains to write plainly.

"DEAREST HETTY,—I have spoken truly when I have said that I loved you, and I shall never forget our love. I shall be your true friend as long as life lasts, and I hope to prove this to you in many ways. If I say anything to pain you in this letter, do not think it is for want of love and tenderness toward you, for there is nothing I would not do for you, if I knew it to be really for your happiness. I cannot bear to think of my little Hetty shedding tears when I am not there to kiss them away; and if I followed only my own inclinations, I should be with her at this moment instead of writing. It is very hard for me to part from her—harder still for me to write words which may seem unkind, though they spring from the truest kindness.

"Dear, dear Hetty, sweet as our love has been to me, sweet as it would be to me for you to love me always, I feel that it would have been better for us both if we had never had that happiness, and that it is my duty to ask you to love me and care for me as little as you can. The fault has all been mine, for, though I have been unable to resist the longing to be near you, I have felt all the while that your affection for me might cause you grief. I ought to have resisted my feelings. I should have done so, if I had been a better fellow than I am; but now, since the past cannot be altered, I am bound to save you from any evil that I have power to prevent. And I feel it would be a great evil for you if your affections continued so fixed on me that you could think of no other man who

might be able to make you happier by his love than I ever can, and if you continued to look toward something in the future which cannot possibly happen. For, dear Hetty, if I were to do what you one day spoke of, and make you my wife, I should do what you yourself would come to feel was for your misery instead of your welfare. I know you can never be happy except by marrying a man in your own station ; and if I were to marry you now, I should only be adding to any wrong I have done, besides offending against my duty in the other relations of life. You know nothing, dear Hetty, of the world in which I must always live, and you would soon begin to dislike me, because there would be so little in which we should be alike.

"And since I cannot marry you, we must part—we must try not to feel like lovers any more. I am miserable while I say this, but nothing else can be. Be angry with me, my sweet one ; I deserve it ; but do not believe that I shall not always care for you—always be grateful to you—always remember my Hetty ; and if any trouble should come that we do not now foresee, trust in me to do everything that lies in my power.

"I have told you where you are to direct a letter to, if you want to write, but I put it down below lest you should have forgotten. Do not write unless there is something I can really do for you ; for, dear Hetty, we must try to think of each other as little as we can. Forgive me, and try to forget everything about me, except that I shall be, as long as I live, your affectionate friend,

"ARTHUR DONNITHORNE."

Slowly Hetty had read this letter ; and when she looked up from it there was the reflection of a blanched face in the old dim glass—a white marble face with rounded childish forms, but with something sadder than a child's pain in it. Hetty did not see the face—she saw nothing—she only felt that she was cold and sick and trembling. The letter shook and rustled in her hand. She laid it down. It was a horrible sensation—this cold and trembling ; it swept away the very ideas that produced it, and Hetty got up to reach a warm cloak from her clothes-press, wrapped it round her, and sat as if she were thinking of nothing but getting warm. Presently she took up the letter with a firmer hand, and began to read it through again. The tears came this time—great rushing tears, that blinded her and blotched the paper. She felt nothing but that Arthur was cruel—cruel to write so, cruel not to marry her. Reasons why he could not marry her had no existence for her mind ; how could she believe in any misery that could come to her from the fulfillment of all she had been longing for and dreaming of ? She had not the ideas that could make up the notion of that misery.

As she threw down the letter again, she caught sight of her face in the glass ; it was reddened now, and wet with tears ; it was almost like a companion that she might complain to—that would pity her. She leaned forward on her elbows, and looked into those dark overflowing eyes, and at that quivering mouth, and saw how the tears came thicker and thicker, and how the mouth became convulsed with sobs.

The shattering of all her little dream world, the crushing blow on her new-born passion, afflicted her pleasure-craving nature with an overpowering pain that annihilated all impulse to resistance, and suspended her anger. She sat sobbing till the candle went out, and then wearied, aching, stupefied with crying, threw herself on the bed without undressing, and went to sleep.

There was a feeble dawn in the room when Hetty awoke, a little after four o'clock, with a sense of dull misery, the cause of which broke upon her gradually, as she began to discern the objects round her in the dim light. And then came the frightening thought that she had to conceal her misery, as well as to bear it, in this dreary daylight that was coming. She could lie no longer ; she got up and went toward the table ; there lay the letter ; she opened her treasure drawer ; there lay the earrings and the locket—the signs of all her short happiness—the signs of the life-long dreariness that was to follow it. Looking at the little trinkets which she had once eyed and fingered so fondly as the earnest of her future paradise of finery, she lived back in the moments when they had been given to her with such tender caresses, such strangely pretty words, such glowing looks, which filled her with a bewildering delicious surprise—they were so much sweeter than she had thought anything could be. And the Arthur who had spoken to her and looked at her in this way, who was present with her now—whose arm she felt round her, his cheek against hers, his very breath upon her—was the cruel, cruel Arthur who had written that letter—that letter which she snatched and crushed and then opened again, that she might read it once more. The half-benumbed mental condition which was the effect of the last night's violent crying, made it necessary to her to look again and see if her wretched thoughts were actually true—if the letter was really so cruel. She had to hold it close to the window, else she could not have read it by the faint light. Yes ! it was worse—it was more cruel. She crushed it up again in anger. She hated the writer of that letter—hated him for the very reason

that she hung upon him with all her love—all the girlish passion and vanity that made up her love.

She had no tears this morning. She had wept them all away last night, and now she felt that dry-eyed morning misery which is worse than the first shock, because it has the future in it as well as the present. Every morning to come, as far as her imagination could stretch, she would have to get up and feel that the day would have no joy for her. For there is no despair so absolute as that which comes with the first moments of our first great sorrow, when we have not yet known what it is to have suffered and be healed, to have despaired and to have recovered hope. As Hetty began languidly to take off the clothes she had worn all the night, that she might wash herself and brush her hair, she had a sickening sense that her life would go on in this way; she should always be doing things she had no pleasure in, getting up to the old tasks of work, seeing people she cared nothing about, going to church, and to Treddleston, and to tea with Mrs. Best, and carrying no happy thought with her. For her short poisonous delights had spoiled forever all the little joys that had once made the sweetness of her life—the new frock ready for Treddleston fair, the party at Mr. Britton's at Broxton wake, the beaux that she would say "No" to for a long while, and the prospect of the wedding that was to come at last, when she would have a silk gown and a great many clothes all at once. These things were all flat and dreary to her now; everything would be a weariness; and she would carry about forever a hopeless thirst and longing.

She paused in the midst of her languid undressing, and leaned against the dark old clothes-press. Her neck and arms were bare, her hair hung down in delicate rings, and they were just as beautiful as they were that night two months ago, when she walked up and down this bedchamber glowing with vanity and hope. She was not thinking of her neck and arms now; even her own beauty was indifferent to her. Her eyes wandered sadly over the dull old chamber, and then looked out vacantly toward the growing dawn. Did a remembrance of Dinah come across her mind? Of her foreboding words, which had made her angry—of Dinah's affectionate entreaty to think of her as a friend in trouble? No; the impression had been too slight to recur. Any affection or comfort Dinah could have given her would have been as indifferent to Hetty this morning as everything else was except her bruised passion. She was only thinking she could

never stay here and go on with the old life ; she could better bear something quite new than sinking back into the old everyday round. She would like to run away that very morning, and never see any of the old faces again. But Hetty's was not a nature to face difficulties—to dare to loose her hold on the familiar and rush blindly on some unknown condition. Here was a luxurious and vain nature, not a passionate one ; and if she were ever to take any violent measure, she must be urged to it by the desperation of terror. There was not much room for her thoughts to travel in the narrow circle of her imagination, and she soon fixed on the one thing she would do to get away from her old life ; she would ask her uncle to let her go to be a lady's-maid. Miss Lydia's maid would help her to get a situation if she knew Hetty had her uncle's leave.

When she had thought of this, she fastened up her hair and began to wash ; it seemed more possible for her to go down stairs and try to behave as usual. She would ask her uncle this very day. On Hetty's blooming health it would take a great deal of such mental suffering as hers to leave any deep impress ; and when she was dressed as neatly as usual in her working-dress, with her hair tucked up under her little cap, an indifferent observer would have been more struck with the young roundness of her cheek and neck, and the darkness of her eyes and eyelashes, than with any signs of sadness about her. But when she took up the crushed letter and put it in her drawer, that she might lock it out of sight, hard, smarting tears, having no relief in them, as the great drops had that fell last night, forced their way into her eyes. She wiped them away quickly ; she must not cry in the daytime ; nobody should find out how miserable she was—nobody should know she was disappointed about anything ; and the thought that the eyes of her aunt and uncle would be upon her gave her the self-command which often accompanies a dread. For Hetty looked out from her secret misery toward the possibility of their ever knowing what had happened, as the sick and weary prisoner might think of the possible pillory. They would think her conduct shameful, and shame was torture. That was poor little Hetty's conscience.

So she locked up her drawer, and went away to her early work.

In the evening, when Mr. Poyser was smoking his pipe, and his good-nature was therefore at its superlative moment, Hetty seized the opportunity of her aunt's absence to say,

"Uncle, I wish you'd let me go for a lady's-maid."

Mr. Poyser took the pipe from his mouth, and looked at Hetty in mild surprise for some moments. She was sewing, and went on with her work industriously.

"Why, what's put that into your head, my wench?" he said at last, after he had given one conservative puff.

"I should like it—I should like it better than farm-work."

"Nay, nay; you fancy so because you donna know it, my wench. It wouldn't be half so good for your health nor for your luck i' life. I'd like you to stay wi' us till you've got a good husband; you're my own niece, and I wouldn't have you go to service, though it was a gentleman's house, as long as I've got a home for you."

Mr. Poyser paused, and puffed away at his pipe.

"I like the needlework," said Hetty, "and I should get good wages."

"Has your aunt been a bit sharp wi' you?" said Mr. Poyser, not noticing Hetty's farther argument. "You mustna mind that, my wench—she does it for your good. She wishes you well; an' there isn't many aunts as are no kin to you 'ud ha' done by you as she has."

"No, it isn't my aunt," said Hetty; "but I should like the work better."

"It was all very well for you to learn the work a bit, an' I gev my consent to that fast enough, sin' Mrs. Pomfret was willing to teach you; for, if anything was t' happen, it's well to know how to turn your hand to different sorts o' things. But I niver meant you to go to service, my wench; my family's ate their own bread and cheese as fur back as anybody knows, hanna they, father? You wouldna like your grandchild to take wage?"

"N-a-y," said old Martin, with an elongation of the word, meant to make it bitter as well as negative, while he leaned forward and looked down on the floor. "But the wench takes arter her mother. I'd hard work t' hould *her* in, an' she married i' spite o' me—a feller wi' on'y two head o' stock when there should ha' been ten on's farm—she might well die o' th' inflammation afore she war thirty."

It was seldom the old man made so long a speech; but his son's question had fallen like a bit of dry fuel on the embers of a long unextinguished resentment, which had always made the grandfather more indifferent to Hetty than to his son's children. Her mother's fortune had been spent by that

good-for-naught Sorrel, and Hetty had Sorrel's blood in her veins.

"Poor thing, poor thing!" said Martin the younger, who was sorry to have provoked this retrospective harshness. "She'd but bad luck. But Hetty's got a good a chance o' getting a solid, sober husband as any gell i' this country."

After throwing out this pregnant hint, Mr. Poyser recurred to his pipe and his silence, looking at Hetty to see if she did not give some sign of having renounced her ill-advised wish. But, instead of that, Hetty, in spite of herself, began to cry, half out of ill-temper at the denial, half out of the day's repressed sadness.

"Hegh, hegh!" said Mr. Poyser, meaning to check her playfully, "don't let's have any crying. Crying's for them as ha' got no home, not for them as want to get rid o' one. What dost think?" he continued to his wife, who now came back into the house-place, knitting with fierce rapidity, as if that movement were a necessary function, like the twittering of a crab's antennæ.

"Think? why, I think we shall have the fowl stole before we are much older, wi' that gell forgetting to lock the pens up o' nights. What's the matter now, Hetty? What are you crying at?"

"Why, she's been wanting to go for a lady's-maid," said Mr. Poyser. "I tell her we can do better for her nor that."

"I thought she's got some maggots in her head, she's gone about wi' her mouth buttoned up so all day. It's all wi' going so among them servants at the Chase, as we war fools for letting her. She thinks it 'ud be a finer life than being wi' them as are akin to her, and ha' brought her up sin' she war no bigger nor Marty. She thinks there's nothing belongs to being a lady's-maid but wearing finer clothes nor she was born to, I'll be bound. It's what rag she can get to stick on her as she's thinking on from morning till night; as I often ask her if she wouldn't like to be the mawkin i' the field, for then she'd be made o' rags inside an' out. I'll never gi' my consent to her going for a lady's-maid while she's got good friends to take care on her till she's married to somebody better nor one o' them valets, as is neither a common man nor a gentleman, an' must live on the fat o' the land, an's like enough to stick his hands under his coat tails and expect his wife to work for him."

"Ay, ay," said Mr. Poyser, "we must have a better husband for her nor that, and there's better at hand. Come,

my wench, give over crying, and get to bed. I'll do 'better for you nor letting you go for a lady's-maid. Let's hear no more on't."

When Hetty was gone up stairs he said,

"I canna make it out as she should want to go away, for I thought she'd got a mind t' Adam Bede. She's looked like it o' late."

"Eh! there's no knowing what she's got a liking to, for things take no more hold on her than if she was a dried pea. I believe that gell Molly—as is aggravatin' enough, for the matter o' that—but I believe she'd care more about leaving us and the children, for all she's been here but a year come Michaelmas, nor Hetty would. But she's got this notion o' being a lady's-maid wi' going among them servants—we might ha' known what it 'ud lead to when we let her go to learn the fine work. But I'll put a stop to it pretty quick."

"Thee'dst be sorry to part wi' her, if it wasn't for her good," said Mr. Poyser. "She's useful to thee i' the work."

"Sorry? yis; I'm fonder on her nor she deserves—a little hard-hearted hussy, wanting to leave us i' that way. I can't ha' had her about me these seven year, I reckon, and done for her, and taught her everything, wi'out caring about her. An' here I'm having linen spun, an' thinking all the while it'll make sheeting and table-clothing for her when she's married, an' she'll live i' the parish wi' us, and never go out of our sights, like a fool as I am for thinking aught about her, as is no better nor a cherry wi' a hard stone inside it."

"Nay, nay, thee mustna make much of a trifle," said Mr. Poyser, soothingly. "She's fond on us, I'll be bound; but she's young, an' gets things in her head as she can't rightly give account on. Them young fillies 'ull run away often wi'out knowing why."

Her uncle's answers, however, had had another effect on Hetty besides that of disappointing her and making her cry. She knew quite well whom he had in his mind in his allusions to marriage, and to a sober, solid husband; and when she was in her bedroom again, the possibility of her marrying Adam presented itself to her in a new light. In a mind where no strong sympathies are at work, where there is no supreme sense of right to which the agitated nature can cling and steady itself to quiet endurance, one of the first results of sorrow is a desperate vague clutching after any deed that will change the actual condition. Poor Hetty's vision of

consequences, at no time more than a narrow fantastic calculation of her own probable pleasures and pains, was now quite shut out by reckless irritation under present suffering, and she was ready for one of those convulsive, motiveless actions by which wretched men and women leap from a temporary sorrow into a life-long misery.

Why should she not marry Adam? She did not care what she did, so that it made some change in her life. She felt confident that he would still want to marry her, and any farther thought about Adam's happiness in the matter had never yet visited her.

"Strange!" perhaps you will say, "this rush of impulse toward a course that might have seemed the most repugnant to her present state of mind, and in only the second night of her sadness!"

Yes the actions of a little trivial soul like Hetty's, struggling amid the serious, sad destinies of a human being, *are* strange. So are the motions of a little vessel without ballast tossed about on a stormy sea. How pretty it looked with its particolored sail in the sunlight, moored in the quiet bay!

"Let that man bear the loss who loosed it from its moorings."

But that will not save the vessel—the pretty thing that might have been a life-long joy.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MRS. POYSER "HAS HER SAY OUT."

THE next Saturday evening there was much excited discussion at the Donnithorne Arms concerning an incident which had occurred that very day—no less than a second appearance of the smart man in top-boots, said by some to be a mere farmer in treaty for the Chase Farm, by others to be the future steward; but by Mr. Casson himself, the personal witness to the stranger's visit, pronounced contemptuously to be nothing better than a bailiff, such as Satchell had been before him. No one had thought of denying Mr. Casson's testimony to the fact that he had seen the stranger, nevertheless he proffered various corroborating circumstances.

"I see him myself," he said; "I see him coming along by

the Crab-tree meadow on a bald-faced hoss. I'd just been t' hev a pint—it was half after ten i' the forenoon, when I hev my pint as reg'lar as the clock—and I says to Knowles, as druv up with his wagon, 'You'll get a bit o' barley to-day, Knowles,' I says, 'if you look about you;' and then I went round by the rick-yard, and towart the Treddles'on road; and just as I come up by the big ash-tree, I see the man i' top-boots coming along on a bald-faced hoss—I wish I may never stir if I didn't. And I stood still till he come up, and I says, 'Good-morning, sir,' I says, for I wanted to hear the turn of his tongue, as I might know whether he was a this-country-man; so I says, 'Good-morning, sir; it'll 'old hup for the barley this morning, I think. There'll be a bit got hin, if we've good luck.' And he says; 'Eh! ye may be raight, there's noo tallin',' he says; and I know'd by that"—here Mr. Casson gave a wink—"as he didn't come from a hundred mile off. I daresay he'd think me a hodd talker, as you Loamshire folks allays does hany wonn as talks the right language."

"The right language!" said Bartle Massey, contemptuously. "You're about as near the right language as a pig's squeaking is like a tune played on a key-bugle."

"Well, I don't know," answered Mr. Casson, with an angry smile. "I should think a man as has lived among the gentry from a by, is likely to know what's the right language pretty nigh as well as a schoolmaster."

"Ay, ay, man," said Bartle, with a tone of sarcastic consolation, "you talk the right language for *you*. When Mike Holdsworth's goat says ba-a-a, it's all right—it 'ud be unnatural for it to make any other noise."

The rest of the party being Loamshire men, Mr. Casson had the laugh strongly against him, and wisely fell back on the previous question, which, far from being exhausted in a single evening, was renewed in the church-yard before service, the next day, with the fresh interest conferred on all news when there is a fresh person to hear it; and that fresh hearer was Martin Poyser, who, as his wife said, "never went boozin' with that set at Casson's, a-sittin' soakin'-in-drink, and looking as wise as a lot o' cod-fish wi' red faces."

It was probably owing to the conversation she had had with her husband on their way from church, concerning this problematic stranger, that Mrs. Poyser's thoughts immediately reverted to him when, a day or two afterward, as she was standing at the house door with her knitting, in that eager leisure which came to her when the afternoon cleaning was

done, she saw the old squire enter the yard on his black pony, followed by John the groom. She always cited it afterward as a case of prevision, which really had something more in it than her own remarkable penetration, that the moment she set eyes on the squire, she said to herself, "I shouldna wonder if he's come about that man as is a-going to take the Chase Farm, wanting Poyser to do something for him without pay. But Poyser's a fool if he does."

Something unwonted must clearly be in the wind, for the old squire's visits to his tenantry were rare ; and though Mrs. Poyser had during the last twelvemonth recited many imaginary speeches, meaning even more than met the ear, which she was quite determined to make to him the next time he appeared within the gates of the Hall Farm, the speeches had always remained imaginary.

"Good-day, Mrs. Poyser," said the old squire, peering at her with his short-sighted eyes—a mode of looking at her which, as Mrs. Poyser observed, "allays aggravated her ; it was as if you was a insect, and he was going to dab his finger-nail on you."

However she said, "Your servant, sir," and courtesied with an air of perfect deference as she advanced toward him ; she was not the woman to misbehave toward her betters, and fly in the face of the catechism, without severe provocation.

"Is your husband at home, Mrs. Poyser ?"

"Yes, sir ; he's only i' the rick-yard. I'll send for him in a minute, if you'll please to get down and step in."

"Thank you ; I will do so. I want to consult him about a little matter ; but you are quite as much concerned in it, if not more. I must have your opinion too."

"Hetty, run and tell your uncle to come in," said Mrs. Poyser, as they entered the house, and the old gentleman bowed low in answer to Hetty's courtesy ; while Totty, conscious of a pinafore stained with gooseberry jam, stood hiding her face against the clock, and peeping round furtively.

"What a fine old kitchen this is !" said Mr. Donnithorne, looking round admiringly. He always spoke in the same deliberate, well-chiseled, polite way, whether his words were sugary or venomous. "And you keep it so exquisitely clean, Mrs. Poyser. I like these premises, do you know, beyond any on the estate."

"Well, sir, since you're fond of 'em, I should be glad if you'd let a bit o' repairs be done to 'em, for the boarding's i' that state, as we're likely to be eaten up wi' rats and mice ;

and the cellar, you may stan' up to your knees i' the water in't if you like to go down ; but perhaps you'd rather believe my words. Won't you please to sit down, sir ? ”

“ Not yet ; I must see your dairy. I have not seen it for years, and I hear on all sides about your fine cheese and butter,” said the squire, looking politely unconscious that there could be any question on which he and Mrs. Poyser might happen to disagree. “ I think I see the door open, there ; you must not be surprised if I cast a covetous eye on your cream and butter. I don't expect that Mrs. Satchell's cream and butter will bear comparison with yours.”

I can't say, sir, I'm sure. It's seldom I see other folks's butter, though there's some on it as no one need to see—the smell's enough.”

“ Ah ! now this I like,” said Mr. Donnithrone, looking round at the damp temple of cleanliness, but keeping near the door. “ I'm sure I should like my breakfast better if I knew the butter and cream came from his dairy. Thank you, that really is a pleasant sight. Unfortunately, my slight tendency to rheumatism makes me afraid of damp ; I'll sit down in your comfortable kitchen. Ah ! Poyser how do you do ? In the midst of business, I see, as usual. I've been looking at your wife's beautiful dairy—the best manager in the parish, is she not ? ”

Mr. Poyser had just entered in shirt-sleeves and open waistcoat, with a face a shade redder than usual, from the exertion of “pitching.” As he stood, red, rotund, and radiant before the small wiry, cool old gentleman, he looked like a prize apple by the side of a withered crab.

“ Will you please to take this chair, sir ? ” he said, lifting his father's arm-chair forward a little, “ you'll find it easy.”

“ No, thank you, I never sit in easy-chairs,” said the old gentleman seating himself on a small chair near the door. “ Do you know, Mrs. Poyser—sit down, pray, both of you—I've been far from contented, for some time, with Mrs. Satchell's dairy management. I think she has not a good method as you have.”

“ Indeed, sir, I can't speak to that,” said Mrs. Poyser, in a hard voice, rolling and unrolling her knitting, and looking icily out of her window, as she continued to stand opposite the squire. Poyser might sit down if he liked, she thought ; *she* wasn't going to sit down, as if she give in to any such smooth-tongued palaver. Mr. Poyser, who looked and felt the reverse of icy, did sit down in his three-cornered chair.

"And now, Poyser, as Satchell is laid up, I am intending to let the Chase Farm to a respectable tenant. I'm tired of having a farm on my own hands—nothing is made the best of, in such cases, as you know. A satisfactory bailiff is hard to find ; and I think you and I, Poyser, and your excellent wife here, can enter into a little arrangement in consequence, which will be to our mutual advantage."

"Oh," said Mr. Poyser, with a good-natured blankness of imagination as to the nature of the arrangement.

"If I'm called upon to speak, sir," said Mrs. Poyser, after glancing at her husband with pity at his softness, "you know better than me ; but I don't see what the Chase Farm is t' us—we've cumber enough wi' our own farm. Not but what I'm glad to hear o' anybody respectable coming into the parish ; there's some as ha' been brought in as hasn't been looked on i' that character."

"You're likely to find Mr. Thurle an excellent neighbor, I assure you ; such a one as you will feel glad to have accommodated by the little plan I'm going to mention ; especially as I hope you will find it as much to your own advantage as his."

"Indeed, sir, if it's anything t' our advantage, it'll be the first offer o' the sort I've heard on. It's them that take advantage that get advantage i' this world, I think ; folks have to wait long enough afore it's brought to 'em."

"The fact is, Poyser," said the squire, ignoring Mrs. Poyser's theory of worldly prosperity, "there is too much dairy-land, and too little plow-land, on the Chase Farm, to suit Thurle's purpose—indeed, he will only take the farm on condition of some change in it ; his wife, it appears, is not a clever dairy-woman, like yours. Now, the plan I'm thinking of is to effect a little exchange. If you were to have the Hollow Pastures, you might increase your dairy, which must be so profitable under your wife's management ; and I should request you, Mrs. Poyser, to supply my house with milk, cream, and butter at the market prices. On the other hand, Poyser, you might let Thurle have the Lower and Upper Ridges, which really, with our wet seasons, would be a good riddance for you. There is much less risk in dairy-land than corn-land."

Mr. Poyser was leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, his head on one side, and his mouth screwed up—apparently absorbed in making the tips of his fingers meet so as to represent with perfect accuracy the ribs of a ship. He was much too acute a man not to see through the whole busi-

ness, and to foresee perfectly what would be his wife's view of the subject ; but he disliked giving unpleasant answers ; unless it was on a point of farming practice, he would rather give up than have a quarrel, any day ; and after all, it mattered more to his wife than to him. So after a few moments' silence, he looked up at her and said mildly, "What dost say?"

Mrs. Poyser had had her eyes fixed on her husband with cold severity during his silence, but now she turned away her head with a toss, looked icily at the opposite roof of the cowshed, and, spearing her knitting together with the loose pin, held it firmly between her clasped hands.

"Say? Why, I say you may do as you like about giving up any o' your corn-land, afore your lease is up, which it won't be for a year come next Michaelmas Lady-day, but I'll not consent to take more dairy work into my hands, either for love or money ; and there's nayther love nor money here, as I can see, on'y other folks's love o' theirselves, and the money as is to go into other folks's pockets. I know there's them as is born t' own the land, and them as is born to sweat on 't,"—here Mrs. Poyser paused to gasp a little—"and I know it's christened folks's duty to submit to their betters as fur as flesh and blood 'ull bear it ; but I'll not make a martyr o' myself, and wear myself to skin and bone, and worret myself as if I was a churn wi' butter a-coming in't, for no landlord in England, not if he was King George himself."

"No, no, my dear Mrs. Poyser, certainly not," said the squire, still confident in his own powers of persuasion ; "you must not overwork yourself ; but don't you think your work will rather be lessened than increased in this way? There is so much milk required at the Abbey, that you will have little increase of cheese and butter making from the addition to your dairy ; and I believe selling the milk is the most profitable way of disposing of dairy produce, is it not?"

"Ay, that's true," said Mr. Poyser, unable to repress an opinion on a question of farming profits, and forgetting that it was not in this case a purely abstract question.

"I dare say," said Mrs. Poyser bitterly, turning her head half way toward her husband, and looking at the vacant arm-chair—"I dare say it's true for men as sit i' th' chimney-corner and make believe as everything's cut wi' ins an' outs to fit int' everything else. If you could make a pudding wi' thinking o' the batter, it 'ud be easy getting dinner. How do I know whether the milk 'ull be wanted constant? What's to

make me sure as the house won't be put o' board-wage afore we're many months older, and then I may have to lie awake o' nights wi' twenty gallons o' milk on my mind—and Dingall 'ull take no more butter, let alone paying for it; and we must fat pigs till we're obliged to beg the butcher on our knees to buy 'em, and lose half of 'em wi' the measles. And there's the fetching and carrying, as 'ud be welly half a day's work for a man an' hoss—*that's* to be took out o' the profits, I reckon? but there's folks 'ud hold a sieve under the pump and expect to carry away the water."

"That difficulty—about the fetching and carrying—you will not have, Mrs. Poyser," said the squire, who thought that this entrance into particulars indicated a distant inclination to compromise on Mrs. Poyser's part—"Bethell will do that regularly with the cart and pony."

"Oh, sir, begging your pardon, I've never been used t' having gentlefolks' servants coming about my back places, a-making love to both the gells at once, and keeping 'em with their hands on their hips listening to all manner o' gossip when they should be down on their knees a-scouring. If we're to go to ruin, it shanna be wi' having our back kitchen turned into a public."

"Well, Poyser," said the squire, shifting his tactics, and looking as if he thought Mr. Poyser had suddenly withdrawn from the proceedings and left the room, "you can turn the Hollows into feeding-land. I can easily make another arrangement about supplying my house. And I shall not forget your readiness to accommodate your landlord as well as a neighbor. I know you will be glad to have your lease renewed for three years, when the present one expires; otherwise, I dare say Thurle, who is a man of some capital, would be glad to take both the farms, as they could be worked so well together. But I don't want to part with an old tenant like you."

To be thrust out of the discussion in this way would have been enough to complete Mrs. Poyser's exasperation, even without the final threat. Her husband, really alarmed at the possibility of their leaving the old place where he had been bred and born—for he believed the old squire had small spite enough for anything—was beginning a mild remonstrance explanatory of the inconvenience he should find in having to buy and sell more stock, with,

"Well, sir, I think as it's rether hard" . . . when Mrs. Poyser burst in with the desperate determination to have her

say out this once, though it were to rain notices to quit, and the only shelter were the work-house.

"Then, sir, if I may speak—as, for all I'm a woman, and there's folks as thinks a woman's fool enough to stan' by an' look on while the men sign her soul away, I've a right to speak, for I make one quarter o' the rent, and save th' other quarter—I say, if Mr. Thurle's so ready to take farms under you it's a pity but what he should take this, and see if he likes to live in a house wi' all the plagues o' Egypt in 't—wi' the cellar full o' water, and frogs and toads hoppin' up the steps by dozens—and the floors rotten, and the rats and mice gnawing every bit o' cheese, and runnin' over our heads as we lie i' bed till we expect 'em to eat us up alive—as its a mercy they hanna eat the children long ago. I should like to see if there's another tenant besides Poyser as 'ud put up wi' never having a bit o' repairs done till a place tumbles down—and not then, on'y wi' begging and praying, and having to pay half—and being strung up wi' the rent as it's much if he gets enough out o' the land to pay, for all he's put his own money into the ground beforehand. See if you'll get a stranger to lead such a life here as that; a maggot must be born i' the rotten cheese to like it, I reckon. You may run away from my words, sir," continued Mrs. Poyser, following the old squire beyond the door—for after the first moments of stunned surprise he had got up, and waving his hand toward her with a smile, had walked out toward his pony. But it was impossible for him to get away immediately, for John was walking the pony up and down the yard, and was some distance from the causeway when his master beckoned.

"You may run away from my words, sir, and you may go spinnin' underhand ways o' doing us a mischief, for you've got old Harry to your friend, though nobody else is, but I tell you for once as we're not dumb creaturs to be abused and made money on by them as ha' got the lash i' their hands, for want o' knowing how t' undo the tackle. An' if I'm th' only one as speaks my mind, there's plenty o' the same way o' thinking i' this parish and the next to t', for your name's no better than a brimstone match in everybody's nose—if it isna two-three old folks as you think o' saving your soul by giving 'em a bit o' flannel and a drop o' porridge. An' you may be right i' thinking it 'll take but little to save your soul, for it 'll be the smallest savin' y' iver made, wi' all your scrapin'."

There are occasions on which two servant-girls and a waggoner may be a formidable audience, and as the squire rode

away on his black pony, even the gift of short-sightedness did not prevent him from being aware that Molly, and Nancy, and Tim were grinning not far from him. Perhaps he suspected that sour old John was grinning behind him—which was also the fact. Meanwhile the bull-dog, the black-and-tan terrier, Alick's sheep-dog, and the gander hissing at a safe distance from the pony's heels, carried out the idea of Mrs. Poyser's solo in an impressive quartette.

Mrs. Poyser, however had no sooner seen the pony move off than she turned round, gave the two hilarious damsels a look which drove them into the back kitchen, and, unspearing her knitting, began to knit again with her usual rapidity, as she re-entered the house.

"Thee'st done it now," said Mr. Poyser, a little alarmed and uneasy, but not without some triumphant amusement at his wife's outbreak.

"Yes, I know I've done it," said Mrs. Poyser; "but I've had my say out, and I shall be th' easier fo' t all my life. There's no pleasure i' living if you're to be corked up for ever, and only dribble your mind out by the sly, like a leaky barrel. I shan't repent saying what I think, if I live to be as old as th' old squire; and there's little likelihoods—for it seems as if them as aren't wanted here are th' only folks as aren't wanted i' th' other world.

"But thee wotna like moving from th' old place, this Michaelmas twelvemonth," said Mr. Poyser, "and going into a strange parish, where thee know'st nobody. It'll be hard upon us both, and upo' father too."

"Eh! it's no use worreting; there's plenty o' things may happen between this and Michaelmas twelvemonth. The captain may be master afore then, for what we know," said Mrs. Poyser, inclined to take an unusually hopeful view of an embarrassment which had been brought about by her own merit, and not by other people's fault.

"*I am none for worreting,*" said Mr. Poyser, rising from his three-cornered chair and walking slowly toward the door. "but I should be loath to leave th' old place, and the parish where I was bred and born, and father afore me. We should leave our roost behind us, I doubt, and never thrive again."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MORE LINKS.

THE barley was all carried at last, and the harvest suppers went by without waiting for the dismal black crop of beans. The apples and nuts were gathered and stored ; the scent of whey departed from the farm-houses, and the scent of brewing came in its stead. The woods behind the Chase, and all the hedgerow trees, took on a solemn splendor under the dark low-hanging skies. Michaelmas was come, with its fragrant basketfuls of purple damsons, and its paler purple daisies, and its lads and lasses leaving or seeking service, and winding along between the yellow hedges, with their bundles under their arms. But though Michaelmas was come, Mr. Thurle, that desirable tenant, did not come to the Chase Farm, and the old squire, after all, had been obliged to put in a new bailiff. It was known throughout the two parishes that the squire's plan had been frustrated because the Poyser's had refused to be "put upon," and Mrs. Poyser's outbreak was discussed in all the farm-houses with a zest which was only heightened by frequent repetition. The news that "Bony" was come back from Egypt was comparatively insipid, and the repulse of the French in Italy was nothing to Mrs. Poyser's repulse of the old squire. Mr. Irwine had heard a version of it in every parishioner's house with the one exception of the Chase. But since he had always, with marvellous skill, avoided any quarrel with Mr. Donnithorne, he could not allow himself the pleasure of laughing at the old gentleman's discomfiture with any one besides his mother, who declared that if she were rich she should like to allow Mrs. Poyser a pension for life, and wanted to invite her to the Parsonage, that she might hear an account of the scene from Mrs. Poyser's own lips.

"No, no, mother," said Mr. Irwine ; "it was a little bit of irregular justice on Mrs. Poyser's own part, but a magistrate like me must not countenance irregular justice. There must be no report spread that I have taken notice of the quarrel, else I shall lose the little good influence I have over the old man."

"Well, I like that woman even better than her cream

cheeses," said Mrs. Irwine. "She has the spirit of three men, with that pale face of hers: and she says such sharp things too."

"Sharp! yes, her tongue is like a new-set razor. She's quite original in her talk too; one of those untaught wits that help to stock a country with proverbs. I told you that capital thing I heard her say about Craig—that he was like a cock who thought the sun had risen to hear him crow. Now that's an *Æsop's* fable in a sentence."

"But it will be a bad business if the old gentleman turns them out of the farm next Michaelmas, eh?" said Mrs. Irwine.

"Oh, that must not be; and Poyser is such a good tenant, that Donnithorne is likely to think twice and digest his spleen rather than turn them out. But if he should give them notice at Lady-day, Arthur and I must move heaven and earth to mollify him. Such old parishioners as they are must not go."

"Ah! there's no knowing what may happen before Lady-day," said Mrs. Irwine. "It struck me on Arthur's birthday that the old man was a little shaken: he's eighty-three, you know. It's really an unconscionable age. It's only women who have a right to live as long as that."

"When they've got old-bachelor sons who would be forlorn without them," said Mr. Irwine, laughing and kissing his mother's hand.

Mrs. Poyser, too, met her husband's occasional forebodings of a notice to quit with "There's no knowing what may happen before Lady-day:" one of those undeniable general propositions which are usually intended to convey a particular meaning very far from undeniable. But it is really too hard upon human nature that it should be held a criminal offence to imagine the death even of a king when he is turned eighty-three. It is not to be believed that any but the dullest Britons can be good subjects under that hard condition.

Apart from this foreboding, things went on much as usual in the Poyser household. Mrs. Poyser thought she noticed a surprising improvement in Hetty. To be sure, the girl got "closer tempered, and sometimes she seemed as if there'd be no drawing a word from her with cart-ropes;" but she thought much less about her dress, and went after the work quite eagerly, without any telling. And it was wonderful how she never wanted to go out now—indeed, could hardly be persuaded to go; and she bore her aunt's putting a stop to her

weekly lesson in fine-work at the Chase, without the least grumbling or pouting. It must be, after all, that she had set her heart on Adam at last, and her sudden freak of wanting to be a lady's maid must have been caused by some little pique or misunderstanding between them, which had passed by. For whenever Adam came to the Hall Farm, Hetty seemed to be in better spirits, and to talk more than at other times, though she was almost sullen when Mr. Craig or any other admirer happened to pay a visit there.

Adam himself watched her at first with trembling anxiety, which gave way to surprise and delicious hope. Five days after delivering Arthur's letter, he had ventured to go to the Hall Farm again—not without dread lest the sight of him might be painful to her. She was not in the house-place when he entered, and he sat talking to Mr. and Mrs. Poyser for a few minutes, with a heavy fear on his heart that they might presently tell him Hetty was ill. But by and by there came a light step that he knew, and when Mrs. Poyser said, "Come, Hetty, where have you been?" Adam was obliged to turn round, though he was afraid to see the changed look there must be in her face. He almost started when he saw her smiling as if she were pleased to see him—looking the same as ever at a first glance, only that she had her cap on, which he had never seen her in before when he came of an evening. Still, when he looked at her again and again as she moved about or sat at her work, there was a change; the cheeks were as pink as ever, and she smiled as much as she had ever done of late, but there was something different in her eyes, in the expression of her face, in all her movements, Adam thought—something harder, older, less child-like. "Poor thing!" he said to himself, "that's allays likely. It's because she's had her first headache. But she's got a spirit to bear up under it. Thank God for that."

As the weeks went by and he saw her always looking pleased to see him—turning up her lovely face toward him as if she meant him to understand that she was glad for him to come—and going about her work in the same equable way, making no sign of sorrow, he began to believe that her feeling toward Arthur must have been much slighter than he had imagined in his first indignation and alarm, and that she had been able to think of her girlish fancy that Arthur was in love with her, and would marry her, was a folly of which she was timely cured. And it perhaps was, as he had sometimes, in his more cheerful moments hoped it would be—her heart was

really turning with all the more warmth toward the man she knew to have a serious love for her.

Possibly you think that Adam was not at all sagacious in his interpretations, and that it was altogether extremely unbecoming in a sensible man to behave as he did—falling in love with a girl who really had nothing more than her beauty to recommend her, attributing imaginary virtues to her, and even condescending to cleave to her after she had fallen in love with another man, waiting for her kind looks as a patient trembling dog waits for his master's eye to be turned upon him. But in so complex a thing as human nature, we must consider it is hard to find rules without exceptions. Of course I know that, as a rule, sensible men fall in love with the most sensible women of their acquaintance, see through all the pretty deceits of coquettish beauty, never imagine themselves loved when they are not loved, cease loving on all proper occasions, and marry the woman most fitted for them in every respect—indeed, so as to compel the approbation of all the maiden ladies in their neighborhood. But even to this rule an exception will occur now and then in the lapse of centuries, and my friend Adam was one. For my own part, however, I respect him none the less; nay, I think the deep love he had for that sweet, rounded, blossom-like, dark-eyed Hetty, of whose inward self he was really very ignorant, came out of the very strength of his nature and not out of any inconsistent weakness. Is it any weakness, pray, to be wrought on by exquisite music? to feel its wondrous harmonies searching the subtlest windings of your soul, the delicate fibres of life where no memory can penetrate, and binding together your whole being past and present in one unspeakable vibration; melting you in one moment with all the tenderness, all the love that has been scattered through the toilsome years, concentrating in one emotion of heroic courage or resignation all the hard-learned lessons of self-renouncing sympathy, blending your present joy with past sorrow, and your present sorrow with all your past joy? If not, then neither is it a weakness to be so wrought upon by the exquisite curves of a woman's cheek and neck and arms, by the liquid depths of her beseeching eyes, or the sweet childish pout of her lips. For the beauty of a lovely woman is like music; what can one say more? Beauty has an expression beyond and far above the one woman's soul that it clothes, as the words of genius have a wider meaning than the thought that prompted them; it is more than a woman's love that moves us in a

woman's eyes—it seems to be a far-off, mighty love that has come near to us, and made speech for itself there ; the rounded neck, the dimpled arm, move us by something more than their prettiness—by their close kinship with all we have known of tenderness and peace. The noblest nature sees the most of this *impersonal* expression in beauty (it is needless to say that there are gentlemen, with whiskers dyed and undyed, who see none of it whatever), and, for this reason, the noblest nature is often the most blinded to character of the one woman's soul that the beauty clothes. Whence, I fear the tragedy of human life is likely to continue for a long time to come, in spite of mental philosophers who are ready with the best receipts for avoiding all mistakes of the kind.

Our good Adam had no fine words into which he could put his feeling for Hetty ; he could not disguise mystery in this way with the appearance of knowledge ; he called his love frankly a mystery, as you have heard him. He only knew that the sight and memory of her moved him deeply, touching the spring of all love and tenderness, all faith and courage within him. How could he imagine narrowness, selfishness, hardness in her ? He created the mind he believed in out of his own, which was large, unselfish, tender.

The hopes he felt about Hetty softened a little his feeling toward Arthur. Surely his attentions to Hetty must have been of a slight kind ; they were altogether wrong, and such as no man in Arthur's position ought to have allowed himself, but they must have had an air of playfulness about them, which had probably blinded him to their danger, and had prevented them from laying any strong hold on Hetty's heart. As the new promise of happiness rose for Adam, his indignation and jealousy began to die out ; Hetty was not made unhappy ; he almost believed that she liked him best ; and the thought sometimes crossed his mind that the friendship which had once seemed dead forever might revive in the days to come, and he would not have to say "good-by" to the grand old woods, but would like them better because they were Arthur's. For this new promise of happiness, following so quickly on the shock of pain, had an intoxicating effect on the sober Adam, who had all his life been used to much hardship and moderate hope. Was he really going to have an easy lot after all ? It seemed so ; for at the beginning of November Jonathan Burge, finding it impossible to replace Adam, had at last made up his mind to offer him a share in his business, without farther condition than that he should continue to

give his energies to it, and renounce all thought of having a separate business of his own. Son-in-law or no son-in-law, Adam had made himself too necessary to be parted with, and his head-work was so much more important to Burge than his skill in handicraft, that his having the management of the woods made little difference in the value of his services ; and as to the bargains about the squire's timber, it would be easy to call in a third person. Adam saw here an opening into a broadening path of prosperous work, such as he had thought of with ambitious longing ever since he was a lad ; he might come to build a bridge, or a town-hall, or a factory, for he had always said to himself that Jonathan Burge's building business was like an acorn, which might be the mother of a great tree. So he gave his hand to Burge on that bargain, and went home with his mind full of happy visions, in which (my refined reader will perhaps be shocked when I say it) the image of Hetty hovered and smiled over plans for seasoning timber at a trifling expense, calculations as to the cheapening of bricks per thousand by water carriage, and a favorite scheme for the strengthening of roofs and walls with a peculiar form of iron girder. What then ? Adam's enthusiasm lay in these things ; and our love is inwrought in our enthusiasm as electricity is inwrought in the air, exalting its power by a subtle presence.

Adam would be able to take a separate house now, and provide for his mother in the old one ; his prospects would justify his marrying very soon, and if Dinah consented to have Seth, their mother would perhaps be more contented to live apart from Adam. But he told himself that he would not be hasty—he would not try Hetty's feeling for him until it had time to grow strong and firm. However, to-morrow, after church, he would go to the Hall Farm and tell them the news. Mr. Poyser, he knew, would like it better than a five-pound note, and he should see if Hetty's eyes brightened at it. The months would be short with all he had to fill his mind, and this foolish eagerness which had come over him of late must not hurry him into any premature words. Yet when he got home and told his mother the good news, and at his supper, while she sat by almost crying for joy, and wanting him to eat twice as much as usual because of his good luck, he could not help preparing her gently for the coming change, by talking of the old house being too small for them all to go on living in it always.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE BETROTHAL.

It was a dry Sunday, and really a pleasant day for the 2d of November. There was no sunshine, but the clouds were high, and the wind was so still that the yellow leaves which fluttered down from the hedgerow elms must have fallen from pure decay. Nevertheless, Mrs. Poyser did not go to church, for she had taken a cold too serious to be neglected; only two winters ago she had been laid up for weeks with a cold; and since his wife did not go to church, Mr. Poyser considered that on the whole it would be as well for him to stay away too and "keep her company." He could, perhaps, have given no precise form to the reasons that determined this conclusion; but it is well known to all experienced minds that our firmest convictions are often dependent on subtle impressions for which words are quite too coarse a medium. However it was, no one from the Poyser family went to church that afternoon except Hetty and the boys; yet Adam was bold enough to join them after church, and say that he would walk home with them, though all the way through the village he appeared to be chiefly occupied with Marty and Tommy, telling them about the squirrels in Binton Coppice, and promising to take them there some day. But when they came to the fields, he said to the boys, "Now, then, which is the stoutest walker? Him as gets to th' home-gate first shall be the first to go with me to Binton Coppice on the donkey. But Tommy must have the start up to the next stile, because he's the smallest."

Adam had never behaved so much like a determined lover before. As soon as the boys had both set off, he looked down at Hetty and said, "Won't you hang on my arm, Hetty?" in a pleading tone, as if he had already asked her and she had refused. Hetty looked up at him smilingly and put her round arm through his in a moment. It was nothing to her—putting her arm through Adam's; but she knew he cared a great deal about having her arm through his, and she wished him to care. Her heart beat no faster, and she looked at the half-bare hedgerows and the ploughed field with the same sense of oppressive dulness as before. But Adam scarcely felt that he

was walking ; he thought Hetty must know that he was pressing her arm a little—a very little ; words rushed to his lips that he dared not utter—that he had made up his mind not to utter yet ; and so he was silent for the length of that field. The calm patience with which he had once waited for Hetty's love, content only with her presence and the thought of the future, had forsaken him since that terrible shock nearly three months ago. The agitations of jealousy had given a new restlessness to his passion—had made fear and uncertainty too hard almost to bear. But though he might not speak to Hetty of his love, he would tell her about his new prospects, and see if she would be pleased. So, when he was enough master of himself to talk, he said,

"I'm going to tell your uncle some news that'll surprise him, Hetty ; and I think he'll be glad to hear it too."

"What's that ?" Hetty said, indifferently.

"Why, Mr. Burge has offered me a share in his business, and I'm going to take it."

There was a change in Hetty's face, certainly not produced by any agreeable impression from this news. In fact, she felt a momentary annoyance and alarm ; for she had so often heard it hinted by her uncle that Adam might have Mary Burge and a share in the business any day if he liked, that she associated the two objects now, and the thought immediately occurred that perhaps Adam had given her up because of what had happened lately, and had turned toward Mary Burge. With that thought, and before she had time to remember any reasons why it could not be true, came a new sense of forsakenness and disappointment : the one thing—the one person—her mind had rested on in its dull weariness had slipped away from her, and peevish misery filled her eyes with tears. She was looking on the ground, but Adam saw her face, saw the tears, and before he had finished saying, "Hetty, dear Hetty, what are you crying for?" his eager, rapid thought had flown through all the causes conceivable to him, and had at last alighted on half the true one. Hetty thought he was going to marry Mary Burge—she didn't like him to marry—perhaps she didn't like him to marry any one but herself? All caution was swept away—all reason for it was gone, and Adam could feel nothing but trembling joy. He leaned toward her and took her hand, as he said,

"I could afford to be married now, Hetty—I could make a wife comfortable ; but I shall never want to be married if you won't have me."

Hetty looked up at him and smiled through her tears, as she had done to Arthur that first evening in the wood, when she had thought he was not coming, and yet he came. It was a feeblér relief, a feeblér triumph she felt now, but the great dark eyes and the sweet lips were as beautiful as ever, perhaps more beautiful, for there was a more luxuriant womanliness about Hetty of late. Adam could hardly believe in the happiness of that moment. His right hand held her left, and he pressed her arm close against his heart as he leaned down toward her.

"Do you really love me, Hetty? Will you be my own wife, to love and take care of as long as I live?"

Hetty did not speak, but Adam's face was very close to hers, and she put up her round cheek against his, like a kitten. She wanted to be caressed—she wanted to feel as if Arthur were with her again.

Adam cared for no words after that, and they hardly spoke through the rest of the walk. He only said, "I may tell your uncle and aunt, mayn't I, Hetty?" and she said "Yes."

The red fire-light on the hearth at the Hall Farm shone on joyful faces that evening, when Hetty was gone up stairs and Adam took the opportunity of telling Mr. and Mrs. Poyser and the grandfather that he saw his way to maintaining a wife now, and that Hetty had consented to have him.

"I hope you've no objections against me for her husband," said Adam; "I'm a poor man as yet, but she shall want nothing as I can work for." "Objections?" said Mr. Poyser, while the grandfather leaned forward and brought out his long "Nay, nay." "What objections can we ha' to you, lad? Never mind your being poorish as yet; there's money in your head-piece as there's money i' the sown field, but it must ha' time. You'n got enough to begin on, and we can do a deal tow'rt the bit o' furniture you'll want. Thee'st got feathers and linen to spare—plenty, eh?"

This question was of course addressed to Mrs. Poyser, who was wrapped up in a warm shawl, and was too hoarse to speak with her usual facility. At first she only nodded emphatically, but she was presently unable to resist the temptation to be more explicit.

"It 'ud be a poor tale, if I hadna feathers and linen," she said hoarsely, "when I never sell a fowl but what's plucked, and the wheel's a-going every day o' the week."

"Come, my wench," said Mr. Poyser, when Hetty came down, "come and kiss us, and let us wish you luck."

Hetty went very quietly and kissed the big, good-natured man.

"There!" he said, patting her on the back, "go and kiss your aunt and your grandfather. I'm as wishful t' have you settled well as if you was my own daughter; and so's your aunt, I'll be bound, for she's done by you this seven 'ear, Hetty, as if you'd been her own. Come, come, now," he went on, becoming jocose, as soon as Hetty had kissed her aunt and the old man, "Adam wants a kiss too, I'll warrant, and he's a right to one now."

Hetty turned away, smiling, toward her empty chair.

"Come, Adam, then take one," persisted Mr. Poyser, "else y' arena half a man."

Adam got up, blushing like a small maiden—great, strong fellow as he was—and, putting his arm round Hetty, stooped down and gently kissed her lips.

It was a pretty scene in the red fire-light; for there were no candles; why should there be, when the fire was so bright, and was reflected from all the pewter and the polished oak? No one wanted to work on a Sunday evening. Even Hetty felt something like contentment in the midst of all this love. Adam's attachment to her, Adam's caress, stirred no passion in her, were no longer enough to satisfy her vanity; but they were the best her life offered her now: they promised her some change.

There was a great deal of discussion before Adam went away, about the possibility of his finding a house that would do for him to settle in. No house was empty except the one next to Will Maskery's in the village, and that was too small for Adam now. Mr. Poyser insisted that the best plan would be for Seth and his mother to move, and leave Adam in the old home, which might be enlarged after a while, for there was plenty of space in the wood-yard and garden; but Adam objected to turning his mother out.

"Well, well," said Mr. Poyser at last, "we needna fix iverything to-night. We must take time to consider. You canna think o' getting married afore Easter. I'm not for long courtships, but there must be a bit o' time to make things comfortable."

"Ay, to be sure," said Mrs. Poyser, in a hoarse whisper; "Christian folks can't be married like cuckoos, I reckon."

"I'm a bit daunted though," said Mr. Poyser, "when I think as we may have notice to quit, and belike be forced to take a farm twenty miles off."

"Eh!" said the old man, staring at the floor, and lifting his hands up and down, while his arms rested on the elbows of the chair, "it's a poor tale if I mun leave th' ould spot, an' be buried in a strange parish. An' you'll happen ha' double rates to pay," he added, looking up at his son.

"Well, thee mustna fret beforehand," said Martin the younger. "Happen the captain 'ull come home and make our peace wi' th' old squire. I build upo' that, for I know the captain 'ull see folks righted if he can."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE HIDDEN DREAD.

It was a busy time for Adam—the time between the beginning of November and the beginning of February, and he could see little of Hetty except on Sundays. But a happy time, nevertheless; for it was taking him nearer and nearer to March, when they were to be married, and all the little preparations for their new housekeeping marked the progress toward the longed-for day. Two new rooms had been "run up" to the old house, for his mother and Seth were to live with them after all. Lisbeth had cried so piteously at the thought of leaving Adam, that he had gone to Hetty and asked her if, for the love of him, she would put up with his mother's ways, and consent to live with her. To his great delight Hetty said, "Yes, I'd as soon she lived with us as not." Hetty's mind was oppressed at that moment with a worse difficulty than poor Lisbeth's ways; she could not care about them. So Adam was consoled for the disappointment he had felt when Seth had come back from his visit to Snowfield and said "it was no use—Dinah's heart wasna turned toward marrying." For when he told his mother that Hetty was willing they should all live together, and there was no more need of them to think of parting, she said, in a more contented tone than he had heard her speak in since it had been settled that he was to be married, "Eh! my lad, I'll be as still as th' ould tabby, an' ne'er want to do aught but th' offal work as *she* wanna like to do. An' then we needna part th' platters an' things as ha' stood on the shelf together sin' afore thee was born."

There was only one cloud that now and then came across Adam's sunshine: Hetty seemed unhappy sometimes. But to all his anxious, tender questions, she replied with an assurance that she was quite contented and wished nothing different; and the next time he saw her she was more lively than usual. It might be that she was a little overdone with work and anxiety now, for soon after Christmas Mrs. Poyser had taken another cold, which had brought on inflammation, and this illness had confined her to her room all through January. Hetty had to manage everything down stairs, and half supply Molly's place too, while that good damsel waited on her mistress; and she seemed to throw herself so entirely into her new functions, working with a grave steadiness which was new in her, that Mr. Poyser often told Adam she was wanting to show him what a good housekeeper he would have; but he "doubted the lass was o'erdoing it—she must have a bit o' rest when her aunt could come down stairs."

This desirable event of Mrs. Poyser's coming down stairs happened in the early part of February, when some mild weather thawed the last patch of snow on the Binton Hills. On one of these days, soon after her aunt came down, Hetty went to Treddleston to buy some of the wedding things which were wanting, and which Mrs. Poyser had scolded her for neglecting, observing that she supposed "it was because they were not for th' outside, else she'd ha' bought 'em fast enough."

It was about ten o'clock when Hetty set off, and the slight hoar frost that had whitened the hedges in the early morning had disappeared as the sun mounted the cloudless sky. Bright February days have a stronger charm of hope about them than any other days in the year. One likes to pause in the mild rays of the sun, and look over the gates at the patient plough-horses turning at the end of the furrow, and think that the beautiful year is all before one. The birds seem to feel just the same; their notes are as clear as the clear air. There are no leaves on the trees and hedgerows, but how green all the grassy fields are! and the dark purplish brown of the ploughed earth and the bare branches is beautiful too. What a glad world this looks like, as one drives or rides along the valleys and over the hills! I have often thought so when, in foreign countries, where the fields and woods have looked to me like our English Loamshire—the rich land tilled with just as much care, the woods rolling down the gentle slopes to the green meadows—I have come on something by the road-

side which has reminded me that I am not in Loamshire : an image of a great agony—the agony of the Cross. It has stood, perhaps, by the clustering apple-blossoms, or in the broad sunshine by the corn-field, or at a turning by the wood where a clear brook was gurgling below ; and surely, if there came a traveller to this world who knew nothing of the story of man's life upon it, this image of agony would seem to him strangely out of place in the midst of this joyous nature. He would not know that, hidden behind the apple-blossoms, or among the golden corn, or under the shrouding boughs of the wood, there might be a human heart beating heavily with anguish—perhaps a young blooming girl, not knowing where to turn for refuge from swift-advancing shame ; understanding no more of this life of ours than a foolish lost lamb wandering farther and farther in the nightfall on the lonely heath, yet tasting the bitterest of life's bitterness.

Such things are sometimes hidden among the sunny fields and behind the blossoming orchards ; and the sound of the gurgling brook, if you came close to one spot behind a small bush, would be mingled for your ear with a despairing human sob. No wonder man's religion has much sorrow in it ; no wonder he needs a Suffering God.

Hetty, in her red cloak and warm bonnet, with her basket in her hand, is turning toward a gate by the side of the Tredleston road, but not that she may have a more lingering enjoyment of the sunshine, and think with hope of the long unfolding year. She hardly knows that the sun is shining ; and for weeks now, when she has hoped at all, it has been for something at which she herself trembles and shudders. She only wants to be out of the high-road, that she may walk slowly, and not care how her face looks, as she dwells on wretched thoughts ; and through this gate she can get into a field-path behind the wide, thick hedgerows. Her great dark eyes wander blankly over the fields like the eyes of one who is desolate, homeless, unloved, not the promised bride of a brave, tender man. But there are no tears in them ; her tears were all wept away in the weary night before she went to sleep. At the next stile the pathway branches off ; there are two roads before her—one along by the hedgerow, which will by and by lead her into the road again ; the other across the fields, which will take her much farther out of the way into the Scantlands, low-shrouded pastures, where she will see nobody. She chooses this, and begins to walk a little faster, as if she had suddenly thought of an object toward which it was

worth while to hasten. Soon she is in the Scantlands, where the grassy land slopes gradually downward, and she leaves the level ground to follow the slope. Farther on there is a clump of trees on the low ground, and she is making her way toward it. No, it is not a clump of trees, but a dark shrouded pool, so full with the wintery rains that the under boughs of the elder bushes lie low beneath the water. She sits down on the grassy bank, against the stooping stem of the great oak that hangs over the dark pool. She has thought of this pool often in the nights of the month that has just gone by, and now at last she is come to see it. She clasps her hands round her knees and leans forward, and looks earnestly at it, as if trying to guess what sort of bed it would make for her young round limbs.

No, she has not courage to jump into that cold watery bed, and if she had, they might find her—they might find out why she had drowned herself. There is but one thing left to her; she must go away, go where they can't find her.

After the first on-coming of her great dread, some weeks after her betrothal to Adam, she had waited and waited, in the blind vague hope that something would happen to set her free from her terror; but she could wait no longer. All the force of her nature had been concentrated on the one effort of concealment, and she had shrunk with irresistible dread from every course that could tend toward a betrayal of her miserable secret. Whenever the thought of writing to Arthur had occurred to her she had rejected it; he could do nothing for her that would shelter her from discovery and scorn among the relatives and neighbors who once more made all her world, now her airy dream had vanished. Her imagination no longer saw happiness with Arthur, for he could do nothing that would satisfy or soothe her pride. No, something else would happen—something *must* happen—to set her free from this dread. In young, childish, ignorant souls there is constantly this blind trust in some unshapen chance; it is as hard to a boy or girl to believe that a great wretchedness will befall them, as to believe that they will die.

But now necessity was pressing hard upon her—now the time of her marriage was close at hand—she could no longer rest in this blind trust. She must run away; she must hide herself where no familiar eyes could detect her; and then the terror of wandering out into the world, of which she knew nothing, made the possibility of going to Arthur a thought which brought some comfort with it. She felt so helpless.

now, so unable to fashion the future for herself, that the prospect of throwing herself on him had a relief in it which was stronger than her pride. As she sat by the pool and shuddered at the dark cold water, the hope that he would receive her tenderly—that he would care for her and think for her—was like a sense of lulling warmth, that made her for the moment indifferent to everything else ; and she began now to think of nothing but the scheme by which she could get away.

She had had a letter from Dinah lately, full of kind words about the coming marriage, which she had heard of from Seth ; and when Hetty had read this letter aloud to her uncle, he had said, "I wish Dinah 'ud come again now, for she'd be a comfort to your aunt when you're gone. What do you think, my wench, o' going to see her as soon as you can be spared, and persuading her to come back wi' you? You might happen persuade her wi' telling her as her aunt wants her, for all she writes o' not being able to come." Hetty had not liked the thought of going to Snowfield, and felt no longing to see Dinah, so she only said, "It's so far off, uncle." But now she thought this proposed visit would serve as a pretext for going away. She would tell her aunt when she got home again, that she should like the change of going to Snowfield for a week or ten days. And then, when she got to Stoniton, where nobody knew her, she would ask for the coach that would take her on the way to Windsor. Arthur was at Windsor, and she would go to him.

As soon as Hetty had determined on this scheme, she rose from the grassy bank of the pool, took up her basket, and went on her way to Treddleston, for she must buy the wedding things she had come out for, though she would never want them. She must be careful not to raise any suspicion that she was going to run away.

Mrs. Poyser was quite agreeably surprised that Hetty wished to go and see Dinah, and try to bring her back to stay over the wedding. The sooner she went the better, since the weather was pleasant now ; and Adam, when he came in the evening, said, if Hetty could set off to-morrow, he would make time to go with her to Treddleston, and see her safe into the Stoniton coach.

"I wish I could go with you and take care of you, Hetty," he said, the next morning, leaning in at the coach door ; "but you won't stay much beyond a week—the time 'll seem long."

He was looking at her fondly, and his strong hand held hers in its grasp. Hetty felt a sense of protection in his presence—she was used to it now ; if she could have had the past undone, and known no other love than her quiet liking for Adam ! The tears rose as she gave him the last look.

“ God bless her for loving me,” said Adam, as he went on his way to work again, with Gyp at his heels.

But Hetty's tears were not for Adam—not for the anguish that would come upon him when he found she was gone from him forever. They were for the misery of her own lot, which took her away from this brave tender man who offered up his whole life to her, and threw her, a poor helpless suppliant, on the man who would think it a misfortune that she was obliged to cling to him.

At three o'clock that day, when Hetty was on the coach that was to take her, they said, to Leicester—part of the long, long way to Windsor—she felt dimly that she might be travelling all this weary journey toward the beginning of new misery.

Yet Arthur was at Windsor ; he would surely not be angry with her. If he did not mind about her as he used to do, he had promised to be good to her.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE JOURNEY IN HOPE

A LONG, lonely journey, with sadness in the heart ; away from the familiar to the strange ; that is a hard and dreary thing even to the rich, the strong, the instructed ; a hard thing, even when we are called by duty, not urged by dread.

What was it then to Hetty ? With her poor narrow thoughts, no longer melting into vague hopes, but pressed upon by the chill of definite fear ; repeating again and again the same small round of memories—shaping again and again the same childish, doubtful images of what was to come—seeing nothing in this wide world but the little history of her own pleasures and pains ; with so little money in her pocket, and the way so long and difficult. Unless she could afford always to go in the coaches—and she felt sure she could not, for the journey

to Stoniton was more expensive than she had expected—it was plain that she must trust to carriers' carts or slow wagons ; and what a time it would be before she could get to the end of her journey ! The burly old coachman from Oakburne, seeing such a pretty young woman among the outside passengers, had invited her to come and sit beside him ; and, feeling that it became him as a man and a coachman to open the dialogue with a joke, he applied himself as soon as they were off the stones to the elaboration of one suitable in all respects. After many cuts with his whip and glances at Hetty out of the corner of his eye, he lifted his lips above the edge of his wrapper, and said,

"He's pretty nigh six foot, I'll be bound, isna he, now ?"

"Who ?" said Hetty, rather startled.

"Why, the sweetheart as you've left behind, or else him as you're goin' arter—which is it ?"

Hetty felt her face flushing and then turning pale. She thought this coachman must know something about her. He must know Adam, and might tell him where she was gone, for it is difficult to country people to believe that those who make a figure in their own parish are not known everywhere else, and it was equally difficult to Hetty to understand that chance words could happen to apply closely to her circumstances. She was too frightened to speak.

"Hegh, hegh ?" said the coachman, seeing that his joke was not so gratifying as he had expected, "you munna take it too ser'ous if he's behaved ill, get another. Such a pretty lass as you can get a sweetheart any day."

Hetty's fear was allayed by and by, when she found that the coachman made no farther allusion to her personal concerns ; but it still had the effect of preventing her from asking him what were the places on the road to Windsor. She told him she was only going a little way out of Stoniton, and when she got down at the inn where the coach stopped, she hastened away with her basket to another part of the town. When she had formed her plan of going to Windsor, she had not foreseen any difficulties except that of getting away ; and after she had overcome this by proposing the visit to Dinah, her thoughts flew to the meeting with Arthur, and the question how he would behave to her—not resting on any probable incidents of the journey. She was too entirely ignorant of travelling to imagine any of its details, and with all her store of money—her three guineas—in her pocket, she thought herself amply provided. It was not until she found how much it cost her to

get to Stoniton that she began to be alarmed about the journey, and then, for the first time, she felt her ignorance as to the places that must be passed on her way. Oppressed with this new alarm, she walked along the grim Stoniton streets, and at last turned into a shabby little inn, where she hoped to get a cheap lodging for the night. Here she asked the landlord if he could tell her what places she must go to, to get to Windsor.

"Well, I can't rightly say. Windsor must be pretty nigh London, for it's where the king lives," was the answer. "Anyhow, you'd best go 't Ashby next—that's south'ard. But there's as many places from here to London as there's houses in Stoniton, by what I can make out. I've never been no traveller myself. But how comes a lone young woman, like you, to be thinking o' taking such a journey as that?"

"I'm going to my brother—he's a soldier at Windsor," said Hetty, frightened at the landlord's questioning look. "I can't afford to go by the coach; do you think there's a cart goes towards Ashby in the morning?"

"Yes, there may be carts, if anybody knowed where they started from; but you might run over the town before you found out. You'd best set off and walk, and trust to summat overtaking you."

Every word sank like lead on Hetty's spirits; she saw the journey stretch bit by bit before her now; even to get to Ashby seemed a hard thing: it might take the day, for what she knew, and that was nothing to the rest of the journey. But it must be done—she must get to Arthur: oh, how she yearned to be again with somebody who would care for her! She who had never got up in the morning without the certainty of seeing familiar faces, people on whom she had an acknowledged claim; whose farthest journey had been to Rosseter on the pillion with her uncle; whose thoughts had always been taking holiday in dreams of pleasure, because all the business of her life was managed for her: this kitten-like Hetty, who till a few months ago had never felt any other grief than that of envying Mary Burge a new ribbon, or being girded at by her aunt for neglecting Totty, must now make her toilsome way in loneliness, her peaceful home left behind forever, and nothing but a tremulous hope of distant refuge before her. Now for the first time, as she lay down to-night in the strange hard bed, she felt that her home had been a happy one, that her uncle had been very good to her, that her quiet lot at Hayslope among the things and people she

knew, with her little pride in her one best gown and bonnet, and nothing to hide from any one, was what she would like to wake up to as a reality, and find all the feverish life she had known besides was a short nightmare. She thought of all she had left behind with yearning regret for her own sake : her own misery filled her heart ; there was no room in it for other people's sorrow. And yet, before the cruel letter, Arthur had been so tender and loving : the memory of that had still a charm for her, though it was no more than a soothing draught that just made pain bearable. For Hetty could conceive no other existence for herself in future than a hidden one, and a hidden life, even with love, would have had no delights for her ; still less a life mingled with shame. She knew no romances, and had only a feeble share in the feelings which are the source of romance, so that well-read ladies may find it difficult to understand her state of mind. She was too ignorant of everything beyond the simple notions and habits in which she had been brought up, to have any more definite idea of her probable future than that Arthur would take care of her somehow, and shelter her from anger and scorn. He would not marry her and make her a lady ; and apart from that she could think of nothing he could give towards which she looked with longing and ambition.

The next morning she rose early, and, taking only some milk and bread for her breakfast, set out to walk on the road towards Ashby, under a leaden-colored sky, with a narrowing streak of yellow, like a departed hope, on the edge of the horizon. Now, in her faintness of heart at the length and difficulty of her journey, she was most of all afraid of spending her money, and becoming so destitute that she would have to ask people's charity ; for Hetty had the pride not only of a proud nature but of a proud class—the class that pays the most 'poor-rates, and most shudders at the idea of profiting by a poor-rate. It had not yet occurred to her that she might get money for her locket and earrings which she carried with her, and she applied all her small arithmetic knowledge of prices to calculating how many meals and how many rides were contained in her two guineas, and the odd shillings, which had a melancholy look, as if they were the pale ashes of the bright-flaming coin.

For the first few miles out of Stoniton she walked on bravely, always fixing on some tree or gate or projecting bush at the most distant visible point in the road as a goal, and feeling a faint joy when she had reached it. But when she

came to the fourth milestone, the first she had happened to notice among the long grass by the roadside, and read that she was still only four miles beyond Stoniton, her courage sank. She had come only this little way, and yet felt tired, and almost hungry again in the keen morning air ; for, though Hetty was accustomed to much movement and exertion indoors, she was not used to long walks, which produced quite a different sort of fatigue from that of household activity. As she was looking at the milestone she felt some drops falling on her face—it was beginning to rain. Here was a new trouble which had not entered into her sad thoughts before ; and quite weighed down by this addition to her burden, she sat down on the step of a stile and began to sob hysterically. The beginning of hardship is like the first taste of bitter food—it seems for a moment unbearable : yet if there is nothing else to satisfy our hunger, we take another bite and go on. When Hetty recovered from her burst of weeping, she rallied her fainting courage ; it was raining, and she must try to get on to a village where she might find rest and shelter. Presently, as she walked on wearily she heard the rumbling of heavy wheels behind her ; a covered wagon was coming, creeping slowly along with a slouching driver cracking his whip beside the horses. She waited for it, thinking that, if the wagoner were not a very sour-looking man, she would ask him to take her up. As the wagon approached her, the driver had fallen behind, but there was something in front of the big vehicle which encouraged her. At any previous moment in her life she would not have noticed it ; but now, the new susceptibility that suffering had awakened in her caused this object to impress her strongly. It was only a small white-and-liver colored spaniel which sat on the front ledge of the wagon, with large timid eyes, and an incessant trembling in the body, such as you may have seen in some of these small creatures. Hetty cared little for animals, as you know, but at this moment she felt as if the helpless timid creature had some fellowship with her, and without being quite aware of the reason, she was less doubtful about speaking to the driver, who now came forward—a large ruddy man, with a sack over his shoulders by way of scarf or mantle.

“Could you take me up in your wagon, if you’re going toward Ashby ?” said Hetty. “I’ll pay you for it.”

“Aw,” said the big fellow, with that slowly dawning smile which belongs to heavy faces, “I can take y’ up fawst enough wi’out bein’ paid for’t, if you dooant mind lyin’ a bit closish

a-top o' the wool-packs. Where do you coom from? and what do you want at Ashby?"

"I come from Stoniton. I'm going a long way—to Windsor."

"What, arter some service, or what?"

"Going to my brother—he's a soldier there."

"Well, I'm going no further nor Leicester—and fur enough too—but I'll take you, if you dooant mind being a bit long on the road. Th' hosses wooant feel *your* weight no more nor they feel the little doog there, as I puck up on the road a fort ni't ago. He war lost, I b'lieve, an's been all of a tremble iver sin'. Come, gi' us your basket, an' come behind and let me put y' in."

To lie on the wool-packs, with a cranny left between the curtains of the awning to let in the air, was luxury to Hetty now, and she half slept away the hours till the driver came to ask her if she wanted to get down and have "some vic-tual;" he himself was going to eat dinner at this "public." Late at night they reached Leicester, and so this second day of Hetty's journey was past. She had spent no money except what she had paid for her food, but she felt that this slow journeying would be intolerable for her another day, and in the morning she found her way to a coach-office to ask about the road to Windsor, and see if it would cost her too much to go part of the distance by coach again. Yes! the distance was too great—the coaches were too dear—she must give them up; but the elderly clerk at the office, touched by her pretty, anxious face, wrote down for her the names of the chief places she must pass through. This was the only comfort she got in Leicester, for the men stared at her as she went along the street, and for the first time in her life Hetty wished no one would look at her. She set out walking again; but this day she was fortunate, for she was soon overtaken by a carrier's cart which carried her to Hinckley, and by the help of a return chaise, with a drunken postillion—who frightened her by driving like Jehu the sun of Nimshi, and shouting hilarious remarks at her, twisting himself backward on his saddle—she was before night in the heart of woody Warwickshire; but still almost a hundred miles from Windsor, they told her. Oh, what a large world it was, and what hard work for her to find her way in it! She went by mistake to Stratford-on-Avon, finding Stratford set down in her list of places, and then she was told she had come a long way out of the right road. It was not till the fifth day that she got to Stony Strat-

ford. That seems but a slight journey as you look at the map, or remember your own pleasant travels to and from the meadowy banks of the Avon. But how wearily long it was to Hetty! It seems to her as if this country of flat fields and hedgerows, and dotted houses, and villages, and market-towns—all so much alike to her indifferent eyes—must have no end, and she must go on wandering among them forever, waiting tired at toll-gates for some cart to come, and then finding the cart went only a little way—a very little way—to the miller's, a mile off perhaps; and she hated going into the public-houses, where she must go to get food and ask questions, because there were always men lounging there, who stared at her and joked her rudely. Her body was very weary too with these days of new fatigue and anxiety; they had made her look more pale and worn than all the time of hidden dread she had gone through at home. When at last she reached Stony Stratford, her impatience and weariness had become too strong for her economical caution; she determined to take the coach for the rest of the way, though it should cost her all her remaining money. She would need nothing at Windsor but to find Arthur. When she had paid the fare for the last coach, she had only a shilling; and as she got down at the sign of the Green Man in Windsor, at twelve o'clock in the middle of the day, hungry and faint, the coachman came up, and begged her to "remember him." She put her hand in her pocket and took out the shilling, but the tears came with the sense of exhaustion and the thought that she was giving away her last means of getting food, which she really required before she could go in search of Arthur. As she held out the shilling, she lifted up her dark, tear-filled eyes to the coachman's face, and said, "Can you give me back sixpence?"

"No, no," he said, gruffly, "never mind; put the shilling up again."

The landlord of the Green Man had stood near enough to witness this scene, and he was a man whose abundant feeding served to keep his good-nature, as well as his person, in high condition. And that lovely, tearful face of Hetty's would have found out the sensitive fibre in most men.

"Come, young woman, come in," he said, "and have a drop o' something; you're pretty well knocked up; I can see that."

He took her into the bar and said to his wife, "Here, missis, take this young woman into the parlor; she's a little

overcome"—for Hetty's tears were falling fast. They were merely hysterical tears ; she thought she had no reason for weeping now, and was vexed that she was too weak and tired to help it. She was at Windsor at last, not far from Arthur.

She looked with eager, hungry eyes at the bread, and meat, and beer that the landlady brought her, and for some minutes she forgot everything else in the delicious sensations of satisfying hunger and recovering from exhaustion. The landlady sat opposite to her as she ate, and looked at her earnestly. No wonder ; Hetty had thrown off her bonnet, and her curls had fallen down ; her face was all the more touching in its youth and beauty because of its weary look, and the good woman's eyes presently wandered to her figure, which in her hurried dressing on her journey she had taken no pains to conceal ; moreover, the stranger's eye detects what the familiar unsuspecting eye leaves unnoticed.

“Why, you're not very fit for travelling,” she said, glancing while she spoke at Hetty's ringless hand. “Have you come far?”

“Yes,” said Hetty, roused by this question to exert more self-command, and feeling the better for the food she had taken. “I've come a good long way, and it's very tiring, but I'm better now. Could you tell me which way to go to this place?” Here Hetty took from her pocket a bit of paper ; it was the end of Arthur's letter on which he had written his address.

While she was speaking the landlord had come in, and had begun to look at her earnestly as his wife had done. He took up the piece of paper which Hetty handed across the table, and read the address.

“Why, what do you want at this house?” he said. It is in the nature of innkeepers, and all men who have no pressing business of their own, to ask as many questions as possible before giving any information.

“I want to see a gentleman as is there,” said Hetty.

“But there's no gentleman there,” returned the landlord. “It's shut up—been shut up this fortnight. What gentleman is it you want? Perhaps I can let you know where to find him.”

“It's Captain Donnithorne,” said Hetty, tremulously, her heart beginning to beat painfully at this disappointment of her hope that she should find Arthur at once.

“Captain Donnithorne! Stop a bit,” said the landlord, slowly. “Was he in the Loamshire militia? A tall young

officer, with a fairish skin and reddish whiskers, and had a servant by the name o' Pym?"

"Oh yes," said Hetty; "you know him—where is he?"

"A fine sight o' miles away from here; the Loamshire militia's gone to Ireland; it's been gone this fortnight."

"Look there! she's fainting," said the landlady, hastening to support Hetty, who had lost her miserable consciousness and looked like a beautiful corpse. They carried her to the sofa and loosened her dress.

"Here's a bad business, I suspect," said the landlord, as he brought in some water.

"Ah! it's plain enough what sort of business it is," said the wife. "She's not a common flaunting dratchell, I can see that. She looks like a respectable country girl, and she comes from a good way off, to judge by her tongue. She talks something like that ostler we had that come from the north; he was as honest a fellow as we ever had about the house; they're all honest folks in the north."

"I never saw a prettier young woman in my life," said the husband. "She's like a pictur in a shop-winder. It goes to one's 'eart to look at her."

"It 'ud have been a good deal better for her if she'd been uglier and had more conduct," said the landlady, who, on any charitable construction, must have been supposed to have more "conduct" than beauty. "But she's coming to again. Fetch a drop more water."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE JOURNEY IN DESPAIR.

HETTY was too ill through the rest of that day for any questions to be addressed to her—too ill even to think with any distinctness of the evils that were to come. She only felt that all her hope was crushed, and that, instead of having found a refuge, she had only reached the borders of a new wilderness where no goal lay before her. The sensations of bodily sickness, in a comfortable bed, and with the tendance of the good-natured landlady, made a sort of respite for her; such a respite as there is in the faint weariness which obliges

a man to throw nimsel on the sand instead of toiling onward under the scorching sun.

But when sleep and rest had brought back the strength necessary for the keenness of mental suffering—when she lay the next morning looking at the growing light, which was like a cruel taskmaster returning to urge from her a fresh round of hated hopeless labor—she began to think what course she must take, to remember that all her money was gone, to look at the prospect of farther wandering among strangers with the new clearness shed on it by the experience of her journey to Windsor. But which way could she turn? It was impossible for her to enter into any service, even if she could obtain it; there was nothing but immediate beggary before her. She thought of a young woman who had been found against the church wall at Hayslope one Sunday, nearly dead with cold and hunger—a tiny infant in her arms: the woman was rescued and taken to the parish. “The parish!” You can, perhaps, hardly understand the effect of that word on a mind like Hetty’s, brought up among people who were somewhat hard in their feelings even toward poverty, who lived among the fields, and had little pity for want and rags as a hard, inevitable fate, such as they sometimes seem in cities, but held them a mark of idleness and vice; and it was idleness and vice that brought burdens on the parish. To Hetty the “parish” was next to the prison in obloquy; and to ask anything of strangers—to beg—lay in the same far-off hideous region of intolerable shame, that Hetty had all her life thought it impossible she could ever come near. But now the remembrance of that wretched woman, whom she had seen herself, on her way from church, being carried into Joshua Rann’s, came back upon her with the new terrible sense that there was very little now to divide *her* from the same lot. And the dread of bodily hardship mingled with the dread of shame, for Hetty had the luxurious nature of a round, soft-coated pet animal.

How she yearned to be back in her safe home again, cherished and cared for as she had always been! Her aunt’s scolding about trifles would have been music to her ears now; she longed for it; she used to hear it in a time when she had only trifles to hide. Could she be the same Hetty that used to make up the butter in the dairy with the Gueldre roses peeping in at the window—she, a runaway whom her friends would not open their doors to again, lying in this strange bed, with the knowledge that she had no money to pay for what

she received, and must offer those strangers some of the clothes in her basket? It was then she thought of her locket and earrings; and, seeing her pocket lie near, she reached it, and spread the contents on the bed before her. There were the locket and earrings in the little velvet-lined boxes, and with them there was a beautiful silver thimble which Adam had bought her, the words "Remember me" making the ornament of the border; a steel purse, with her one shilling in it, and a small red-leather case fastening with a strap. Those beautiful little earrings, with their delicate pearls and garnet, that she had tried in her ears with such longing in the bright sunshine on the 30th of July! She had no longing to put them in her ears now; her head, with its dark rings of hair, lay back languidly on the pillow, and the sadness that rested about her brow and eyes was something too hard for regretful memory. Yet she put her hands up to her ears: it was because there were some thin gold rings in them, which were also worth a little money. Yes, she could surely get some money for her ornaments: those Arthur had given her must have cost a great deal of money. The landlord and landlady had been good to her—perhaps they would help her to get the money for these things.

But this money would not keep her long; what should she do when it was gone? Where should she go? The horrible thought of want and beggary drove her once to think she would go back to her uncle and aunt, and ask them to forgive her and have pity on her. But she shrank from that idea again, as she might have shrunk from scorching metal; she could never endure that shame before her uncle and aunt, before Mary Burge, and the servants at the Chase, and the people at Broxton, and everybody who knew her. They should never know what had happened to her. What *could* she do? she would go away from Windsor—travel again as she had done the last week, and get among the flat green fields with the high hedges round them, where nobody would see her or know her; and there perhaps, when there was nothing else she could do, she should get courage to drown herself in some pond like that in the Scantlands. Yes, she would get away from Windsor as soon as possible; she didn't like these people at the inn to know about her, to know that she had come to look for Captain Donnithorne; she must think of some reason to tell them why she had asked for him.

With this thought she began to put the things back into her pocket, meaning to get up and dress before the landlady

came to her. She had her hand on the red-leather case, when it occurred to her that there might be something in this case which she had forgotten—something worth selling ; for without knowing what she should do with her life, she craved the means of living as long as possible ; and when we desire eagerly to find something, we are apt to search in hopeless places. No, there was nothing but common needles and pins, and dried tulip-petals between the paper leaves where she had written down her little money accounts. But on one of these leaves there was a name, which, often as she had seen it before, now flashed on Hetty's mind like a newly-discovered message. The name was—*Dinah Morris, Snowfield*. There was a text above it, written, as well as the name, by Dinah's own hand with the little pencil, one evening that they were sitting together and Hetty happened to have the red case lying open before her. Hetty did not read the text now ; she was only arrested by the name. Now, for the first time, she remembered without indifference the affectionate kindness Dinah had shown her, and those words of Dinah in the bed-chamber—that Hetty must think of her as a friend in trouble. Suppose she were to go to Dinah, and ask her to help her ? Dinah did not think about things as other people did : she was a mystery to Hetty, but Hetty knew she was always kind. She couldn't imagine Dinah's face turning away from her in dark reproof or scorn, Dinah's voice willingly speaking ill of her, or rejoicing in her misery as a punishment. Dinah did not seem to belong to that world of Hetty's, whose glance she dreaded like scorching fire. But even to her Hetty shrank from beseeching and confession ; she could not prevail on herself to say, "I will go to Dinah ;" she only thought of that as a possible alternative, if she had not courage for death.

The good landlady was amazed when she saw Hetty come down stairs soon after herself, neatly dressed and looking resolutely self-possessed. Hetty told her she was quite well this morning ; she had only been very tired and overcome with her journey, for she had come a long way to ask about her brother, who had run away, and they thought he was gone for a soldier, and Captain Donnithorne might know, for he had been very kind to her brother once. It was a lame story, and the landlady looked doubtfully at Hetty as she told it ; but there was a resolute air of self-reliance about her this morning, so different from the helpless prostration of yesterday, that the landlady hardly knew how to make a remark that

might seem like prying into other people's affairs. She only invited her to sit down to breakfast with them, and, in the course of it, Hetty brought out her earrings and locket, and asked the landlord if he could help her to get money for them: her journey, she said, had cost her much more than she expected, and now she had no money to get back to her friends which she wanted to do at once.

It was not the first time the landlady had seen the ornaments, for she had examined the contents of Hetty's pocket yesterday, and she and her husband had discussed the fact of a country girl having these beautiful things, with a stronger conviction than ever that Hetty had been miserably deluded by the fine young officer.

"Well," said the landlord, when Hetty had spread the precious trifles before him, "we might take 'em to the jeweler's shop, for there's one not far off; but Lord bless you, they wouldn't give you a quarter o' what the things are worth. And you wouldn't like to part with 'em?" he added, looking at her inquiringly.

"Oh, I don't mind," said Hetty, hastily, "so as I can get money to go back."

"And they might think the things were stolen, as you wanted to sell 'em," he went on; "for it isn't usual for a young woman like you to have fine jew'elry like that."

The blood rushed to Hetty's face with anger. "I belong to respectable folks," she said; "I'm not a thief."

"No, that you aren't, I'll be bound," said the landlady; "and you'd no call to say that," looking indignantly at her husband. "The things were gev to her; that's plain enough to be seen."

"I didn't mean as I thought so," said the husband apologetically, "but I said it was what the jeweler might think, and so he wouldn't be offering much money for 'em."

"Well," said the wife, "suppose you were to advance some money on the things yourself, and then if she liked to redeem 'em when she got home, she could, but if we heard nothing from her after two months, we might do as we liked with 'em."

I will not say that in this accommodating proposition the landlady had no regard whatever to the possible reward of her good-nature in the ultimate possession of the locket and earrings; indeed, the effect they would have in that case on the mind of the grocer's wife had presented itself with remarkable vividness to her rapid imagination. The landlord took up

the ornaments and pushed out his lips in a meditative manner. He wished Hetty well, doubtless ; but pray, how many of your well-wishers would decline to make a little gain out of you ? Your landlady is sincerely affected at parting with you, respects you highly, and will really rejoice if any one else is generous to you ; but at the same time she hands you a bill by which she gains as high a percentage as possible.

"How much money do you want to get home with, young woman ?" said the well-wisher, at length.

"Three guineas," answered Hetty, fixing on the sum she set out with, for want of any other standard, and afraid of asking too much.

"Well, I've no objections to advance you three guineas," said the landlord ; "and if you like to send it me back and get the jewelry again, you can, you know ; the Green Man isn't going to run away."

"Oh yes, I'll be very glad if you'll give me that," said Hetty, relieved at the thought that she would not have to go to the jeweler's, and be stared at and questioned.

"But if you want the things again, you'll write before long," said the landlady ; "because when two months are up we shall make up our minds as you don't want 'em."

"Yes," said Hetty, indifferently.

The husband and wife were equally content with this arrangement. The husband thought, if the ornaments were not redeemed, he could make a good thing of it by taking them to London and selling them ; the wife thought she would coax the good man into letting her keep them. And they were accommodating Hetty, poor thing ! a pretty, respectable looking young woman, apparently in a sad case. They declined to take anything for her food and bed ; she was quite welcome. And at eleven o'clock Hetty said "Good-by" to them, with the same quiet, resolute air she had worn all the morning, mounting the coach that was to take her twenty miles back along the way she had come.

There is a strength of self-possession which is the sign that the last hope has departed. Despair no more leans on others than perfect contentment, and in despair pride ceases to be counteracted by the sense of dependence.

Hetty felt that no one could deliver her from the evils that would make life hateful to her ; and no one, she said to herself, should ever know her misery and humiliation. No ; she would not confess even to Dinah ; she would wander out of sight, and drown herself where her body would never be found, and no one should know what had become of her.

When she got off this coach, she began to walk again, and take cheap rides in carts, and get cheap meals, going on and on without distinct purpose, yet strangely, by some fascination, taking the way she had come, though she was determined not to go back to her own country. Perhaps it was because she had fixed her mind on the grassy Warwickshire fields, with the bushy tree-studded hedgerows that made a hiding-place even in this leafless season. She went more slowly than she came, often getting over the stiles and sitting for hours under the hedgerows, looking before her with blank, beautiful eyes ; fancying herself at the edge of a hidden pool, low down, like that in the Scantlands ; wondering if it were very painful to be drowned, and if there would be anything worse after death than what she dreaded in life. Religious doctrines had taken no hold on Hetty's mind ; she was one of those numerous people who have had godfathers and god-mothers, learned their catechism, been confirmed, and gone to church every Sunday, and yet for any practical result for strength in life, or trust in death, have never appropriated a single Christian idea or Christian feeling. You would misunderstand her thoughts during these wretched days, if you imagined that they were influenced either by religious fears or religious hopes.

She chose to go to Stratford-on-Avon again, where she had gone before by mistake ; for she remembered some grassy fields on her former way toward it—fields among which she thought she might find just the sort of pool she had in her mind. Yet she took care of her money still ; she carried her basket ; death still seemed a long way off, and life was so strong in her ! She craved food and rest—she hastened toward them at the very moment she was picturing to herself the bank from which she would leap toward death. It was already five days since she had left Windsor, for she had wandered about, always avoiding speech or questioning looks and recovering her air of proud self dependence whenever she was under observation, choosing her decent lodging at night, and dressing herself neatly in the morning, and setting off on her way steadily, or remaining under shelter if it rained, as if she had a happy life to cherish.

And yet, even in her most self conscious moments, the face was sadly different from that which had smiled at itself in the old speckled glass, or smiled at others when they glanced at it admiringly. A hard and even fierce look had come in the eyes, though their lashes were as long as ever, and they had

all their dark brightness. And the cheek was never dimpled with smiles now. It was the same rounded, pouting, childish prettiness, but with all love and belief in love departed from it—the sadder for its beauty, like that wondrous Medusa-face, with the passionate, passionless lips.

At last she was among the fields she had been dreaming of, on a long, narrow pathway leading toward a wood. If there should be a pool in that wood! It would be better hidden than one in the fields. No, it was not a wood, only a wild brake, where there had once been gravel-pits, leaving mounds and hollows studded with brushwood and small trees. She roamed up and down, thinking there was perhaps a pool in every hollow before she came to it, till her limbs were weary, and she sat down to rest. The afternoon was far advanced, and the leaden sky was darkening, as if the sun were setting behind it. After a little while Hetty started up again, feeling that darkness would soon come on; and she must put off finding the pool till to-morrow, and make her way to some shelter for the night. She had quite lost her way in the fields, and might as well go in one direction as another, for aught she knew. She walked through field after field, and no village, no house was in sight; but *there*, at the corner of this pasture, there was a break in the hedges; the land seemed to dip down a little, and two trees leaned toward each other across the opening. Hetty's heart gave a great beat as she thought there must be a pool there. She walked toward it heavily over the tufted grass, with pale lips and a sense of trembling; it was as if the thing had come in spite of herself, instead of being the object of her search.

There it was, black under the darkening sky; no motion, no sound near. She set down her basket, and then sank down herself on the grass, trembling. The pool had its wintry depth now; by the time it got shallow, as she remembered the pools did at Hayslope, in the summer, no one could find out that it was her body. But then there was her basket—she must hide that too; she must throw it into the water—make it heavy with stones first, and then throw it in. She got up to look about for stones, and soon brought five or six, which she laid down beside her basket, and then sat down again. There was no need to hurry—there was all the night to drown herself in.

She sat leaning her elbow on the basket. She was weary, hungry. There were some buns in her basket—three, which she had supplied herself with at the place where she ate her

dinner. She took them out now, and ate them eagerly, and then sat still again, looking at the pool. The soothed sensation that came over her from the satisfaction of her hunger, and this fixed, dreamy attitude, brought on drowsiness, and presently her head sank down on her knees. She was fast asleep.

When she awoke it was deep night, and she felt chill. She was frightened at this darkness—frightened at the long night before her. If she *could* but throw herself into the water ! No, not yet. She began to walk about that she might get warm again, as if she would have more resolution then. Oh, how long the time was in that darkness ! The bright hearth, and the warmth and the voices of home—the secure uprising and lying down—the familiar fields, the familiar people, the Sundays and holidays, with their simple joys of dress and feasting—all the sweets of her young life rushed before her now, and she seemed to be stretching her arms towards them across a great gulf. She set her teeth when she thought of Arthur ; she cursed him, without knowing what her cursing would do ; she wished he too might know desolation, and cold, and a life of shame that he dared not end by death.

The horror of this cold, and darkness, and solitude—out of all human reach—became greater every long minute ; it was almost as if she were dead already, and knew that she was dead, and longed to get back to life again. But no ; she was alive still ; she had not taken the dreadful leap. She felt a strange contradictory wretchedness and exultation ; wretchedness, that she did not dare to face death ; exultation, that she was still in life—that she might yet know light and warmth again. She walked backward and forward to warm herself, beginning to discern something of the objects around her, as her eyes became accustomed to the night ; the darker line of the hedge, the rapid motion of some living creature—perhaps a field-mouse—rushing across the grass. She no longer felt as if the darkness hedged her in ; she thought she could walk back across the field, and get over the stile ; and then, in the very next field, she thought she remembered there was a hovel of furze near a sheepfold. If she could get into that hovel, she would be warmer ; she could pass the night there, for that was what Alick did at Hayslope in lambing-time. The thought of this hovel brought the energy of a new hope ; she took up her basket and walked across the field, but it was some time before she got in the right direction for the stile. The exercise, and the occupation of finding the

stile, were a stimulus to her, however, and lightened the horror of the darkness and solitude. There were sheep in the next field, and she started a group as she set down her basket and got over the stile ; and the sound of their movement comforted her, for it assured her that her impression was right ; this *was* the field where she had seen the hovel, for it was the field where the sheep were. Right on along the path, and she would get to it. She reached the opposite gate, and felt her way along its rails, and the rails of the sheepfold, till her hands encountered the pricking of the gorsy wall. Delicious sensation ! She had found the shelter ; she groped her way, touching the prickly gorse, to the door, and pushed it open. It was an ill-smelling, close place, but warm, and there was straw on the ground. Hetty sank down on the straw with a sense of escape. Tears came—she had never shed tears before since she left Windsor—tears and sobs of hysterical joy that she had still hold of life, that she was still on the familiar earth, with the sheep near her. The very consciousness of her own limbs was a delight to her ; she turned up her sleeves, and kissed her arms with the passionate love of life. Soon warmth and weariness lulled her in the midst of her sobs, and she fell continually into dozing, fancying herself at the brink of the pool again—fancying that she had jumped into the water, and then awaking with a start, and wondering where she was. But at last deep dreamless sleep came ; her head, guarded by her bonnet, found a pillow against the gorsy walls, and the poor soul, driven to and fro between two equal terrors, found the one relief that was possible to it—the relief of unconsciousness.

Alas ! that relief seems to end the moment it has begun. It seemed to Hetty as if those dozing dreams had only passed into another dream—that she was in the hovel, and her aunt was standing over her with a candle in her hand. She trembled under her aunt's glance, and opened her eyes. There was no candle, but there was a light in the hovel—the light of early morning through the open door. And there was a face looking down on her ; but it was an unknown face, belonging to an elderly man in a smock-frock.

“Why, what do you do here, young woman ?” the man said roughly.

Hetty trembled still worse under this real fear and shame than she had done in her momentary dream under her aunt's glance. She felt that she was like a beggar already—found sleeping in that place. But in spite of her trembling, she was

so eager to account to the man for her presence here, that she found words at once.

"I lost my way," she said. "I'm travelling—north'ard, and I got away from the road into the fields, and was overtaken by the dark. Will you tell me the way to the nearest village?"

She got up as she was speaking, and put her hands to her bonnet to adjust it, and then laid hold of her basket.

The man looked at her with a slow bovine gaze, without giving her any answer, for some seconds. Then he turned away and walked toward the door of the hovel, but it was not till he got there that he stood still, and, turning his shoulder half round toward her, said,

"Aw, I can show you the way to Norton, if you like. But what do you do gettin' out o' the highroad?" he added, with a tone of gruff reproof. "Y'ull be gettin' into mischief, if you dooant mind."

"Yes," said Hetty, "I won't do it again. I'll keep in the road, if you'll be as good as show me how to get to it."

"Why dooant you keep where there's finger-poasses an' folks to ax the way on?" the man said, still more gruffly. "Anybody 'ud think you was a wild woman, an' look at yer."

Hetty was frightened at this gruff old man, and still more at this last suggestion that she looked like a wild woman. As she followed him out of the hovel she thought she would give him a sixpence for telling her the way, and then he would not suppose she was wild. As he stopped to point out the road to her, she put her hand in her pocket to get the sixpence ready, and when he was turning away, without saying good-morning, she held it out to him and said, "Thank you; will you please to take something for your trouble?"

He looked slowly at the sixpence, and then said, "I want none o' your money. You'd better take care on't, else you'll get it stool from yer, if you go trapesin' about the fields like a mad woman a-that'n."

The man left her without farther speech, and Hetty held on her way. Another day had risen, and she must wander on. It was no use to think of drowning herself—she could not do it, at least while she had money left to buy food, and strength to journey on. But the incident on her waking this morning heightened her dread of that time when her money would be all gone; she would have to sell her basket and clothes then, and she would really look like a beggar or a wild woman, as the man had said. The passionate joy in life she had felt

in the night, after escaping from the brink of the black, cold death in the pool, was gone now. Life now, by the morning light, with the impression of that man's hard wondering look at her, was as full of dread as death: it was worse; it was a dread to which she felt chained, from which she shrank and shrank as she did from the black pool, and yet could find no refuge from it.

She took out her money from her purse and looked at it; she had still two-and-twenty shillings; it would serve her for many days more, or it would help her to get on faster to Stonyshire, within reach of Dinah. The thought of Dinah urged itself more strongly now, since the experience of the night had driven her shuddering imagination away from the pool. If it had been only going to Dinah—if nobody besides Dinah would ever know—Hetty could have made up her mind to go to her. The soft voice, the pitying eyes, would have drawn her. But afterward the other people must know, and she could no more rush on that shame than she could rush on death.

She must wander on and on, and wait for a lower depth of despair to give her courage. Perhaps death would come to her, for she was getting less and less able to bear the day's weariness. And yet—such is the strange action of our souls, drawing us by a lurking desire toward the very ends we dread—Hetty, when she set out again for Norton, asked the straightest road northward toward Stonyshire, and kept it all that day.

Poor wandering Hetty, with rounded childish face, and the hard unloving, despairing soul looking out of it—with the narrow heart and narrow thoughts, no room in them for any sorrows but her own, and tasting that sorrow with the more intense bitterness! My heart bleeds for her as I see her toiling along on her weary feet, or seated in a cart, with her eyes fixed vacantly on the road before her, never thinking or caring whither it tends, till hunger comes and makes her desire that a village may be near.

What will be the end? the end of her objectless wandering, apart from all love, caring for human beings only through her pride, clinging to life only as the hunted wounded brute clings to it?

God preserve you and me from being the beginners of such misery

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE QUEST.

THE first ten days after Hetty's departure passed as quietly as any other days with the family at the Hall Farm, and with Adam at his daily work. They had expected Hetty to stay away a week or ten days at least, perhaps a little longer if Dinah came back with her, because there might then be something to detain them at Snowfield. But when a fortnight had passed they began to feel a little surprise that Hetty did not return; she must surely have found it pleasanter to be with Dinah than any one could have supposed. Adam, for his part, was getting very impatient to see her, and he resolved that, if she did not appear the next day (Saturday), he would set out on Sunday morning to fetch her. There was no coach on a Sunday; but by setting out before it was light, and perhaps getting a lift in a cart by the way, he would arrive pretty early at Snowfield, and bring back Hetty the next day—Dinah too, if she were coming. It was quite time Hetty came home, and he would afford to lose his Monday for the sake of bringing her.

His project was quite approved at the Farm when he went there on Saturday evening. Mrs. Poyser desired him emphatically not to come back without Hetty, for she had been quite too long away, considering the things she had to get ready by the middle of March, and a week was surely enough for any one to go out for their health. As for Dinah, Mrs. Poyser had small hope of their bringing her, unless they could make her believe the folks at Hayslope were twice as miserable as the folks at Snowfield. "Though," said Mrs. Poyser, by way of conclusion, "you might tell her she's got but one aunt left, and *she's* wasted pretty nigh to a shadder; and we shall p'rhaps all be gone twenty mile farther off her next Michaelmas, and shall die o' broken hearts among strange folks, and leave the children fatherless and motherless."

"Nay, nay," said Mr. Poyser, who certainly had the air of a man perfectly heart-whole, "it isna so bad as that. Thee't looking rarely now, and getting flesh every day. But I'd be glad for Dinah t' come, for she'd help thee wi' the little uns; they took t' her wonderful."

So at daybreak, on Sunday, Adam set off. Seth went with him the first mile or two, for the thought of Snowfield, and the possibility that Dinah might come again made him restless, and the walk with Adam in the cold morning air, both in their best clothes, helped to give him a sense of Sunday calm. It was the last morning in February, with a low gray sky, and a slight hoar-frost on the green border of the road and on the black hedges. They heard the gurgling of the full brooklet hurrying down the hill, and the faint twittering of the early birds. For they walked in silence, though with a pleased sense of companionship.

"Good-by, lad," said Adam, laying his hand on Seth's shoulder, and looking at him affectionately, as they were about to part, "I wish thee wast going all the way wi' me, and as happy as I am."

"I'm content, Addy, I'm content," said Seth, cheerfully. "I'll be an old bachelor, belike, and make a fuss wi' thy children."

They turned away from each other, and Seth walked leisurely homeward, mentally repeating one of his favorite hymns—he was very fond of hymns :

"Dark and cheerless is the morn
Unaccompanied by thee :
Joyless is the day's return
Till thy mercy's beams I see :
Till thou inward light impart,
Glad my eyes and warm my heart.

"Visit, then, this soul of mine,
Pierce the gloom of sin and grief—
Fill me, Radiancy Divine,
Scatter all my unbelief,
More and more thyself display,
Shining to the perfect day."

Adam walked much faster, and any one coming along the Oakbourne road at sunrise that morning must have had a pleasant sight in this tall, broad-chested man, striding along with a carriage as upright and firm as any soldier's, glancing with keen glad eyes at the dark-blue hills as they began to show themselves on his way. Seldom in Adam's life had his face been so free from any cloud of anxiety as it was this morning ; and this freedom from care, as is usual with constructive, practical minds like his, made him all the more observant of the objects round him, and all the more ready to gather suggestions from them toward his own favorite plans and ingenious contrivances. His happy love—the knowledge

that his steps were carrying him nearer and nearer to Hetty, who was so soon to be his—was to his thoughts what the sweet morning air was to his sensations ; it gave him a consciousness of well-being that made activity delightful. Every now and then there was a rush of more intense feeling toward her, which chased away other images than Hetty ; and along with that would come a wondering thankfulness that all this happiness was given to him—that this life of ours had such sweetness in it. For our friend Adam had a devout mind, though he was perhaps rather impatient of devout words ; and his tenderness lay very close to his reverence, so that the one could hardly be stirred without the other. But after feeling had welled up and poured itself out in this way, busy thought would come back with the greater vigor ; and this morning it was intent on schemes by which the roads might be improved that were so imperfect all through the country, and on picturing all the benefits that might come from the exertion of a single country gentleman, if he would set himself to getting the roads made good in his own district.

It seemed a very short walk, the ten miles to Oakbourne, that pretty town within sight of the blue hills, where he breakfasted. After this, the country grew barer and barer ; no more rolling woods, no more wide-branching trees near frequent homesteads, no more bushy hedgerows ; but gray stone walls intersecting the meagre pastures, and dismal wide-scattered gray stone houses on broken lands where mines had been and were no longer. “A hungry land,” said Adam to himself. “I’d rather go south’ard, where they say it’s as flat as a table, than come to live here ; though if Dinah likes to live in a country where she can be the most comfort to folks, she’s i’ the right to live o’ this side ; for she must look as if she’d come straight from heaven, like th’ angels in the desert, to strengthen them as ha’ got nothing t’ eat.” And when at last he came in sight of Snowfield, he thought it looked like a town that was “fellow to the country,” though the stream through the valley where the great mill stood gave a pleasant greenness to the lower fields. The town lay, grim, stony, and unsheltered, up the side of a steep hill, and Adam did not go forward to it at present, for Seth had told him where to find Dinah. It was at a thatched cottage outside the town, a little way from the mill—an old cottage, standing sideways toward the road, with a little bit of potato-ground before it. Here Dinah lodged with an elderly couple ; and if she and Hetty happened to be out, Adam could learn where they were gone,

or when they would be at home again. Dinah might be out on some preaching errand, and perhaps she would have left Hetty at home. Adam could not help hoping this, and as he recognized the cottage by the roadside before him, there shone out in his face that involuntary smile which belongs to the expectation of a near joy.

He hurried his step along the narrow causeway, and rapped at the door. It was opened by a very clean old woman with a slow palsied shake of the head.

"Is Dinah Morris at home?" said Adam.

"Eh? . . . no," said the old woman, looking up at this tall stranger with a wonder that made her slower of speech than usual. "Will ye please to come in?" she added, retiring from the door, as if recollecting herself. "Why, ye're brother to the young man as come afore, arena ye?"

"Yes," said Adam, entering. "That was Seth Bede. I'm his brother Adam. He told me to give his respects to you and your good master."

"Ay, the same t' him: he was a gracious young man. An' ye feature him, on'y ye're darker. Sit ye down i' th' arm-chair. My man isna come home from meeting."

Adam sat down patiently, not liking to hurry the shaking old woman with questions, but looking eagerly toward the narrow twisting stairs in one corner, for he thought it was possible Hetty might have heard his voice and would come down them.

"So you're come to see Dinah Morris?" said the old woman, standing opposite to him. "An' you didna know she was away from home, then?"

"No," said Adam, "but I thought it likely she might be away, seeing as it's Sunday. But the other young woman—is she at home, or gone along with Dinah?"

The old woman looked at Adam with a bewildered air.

"Gone along wi' her?" she said. "Eh! Dinah's gone to Leeds, a big town ye may ha' heard on, where there's a many o' the Lord's people. She's been gone sin' Friday was a fortnight: they sent her the money for her journey. You may see her room here," she went on, opening a door, and not noticing the effect of her words on Adam. He rose and followed her, and darted an eager glance into the little room, with its narrow bed, the portrait of Wesley on the wall, and the few books lying on the large Bible. He had had an irrational hope that Hetty might be there. He could not speak in the first moment after seeing that the room was

empty ; an undefin'd fear had seized him—something had happened to Hetty on the journey. Still, the old woman was so slow of speech and apprehension, that Hetty might be at Snowfield after all.

"It's a pity ye didna know," she said. "Have ye come from your own country o' purpose to see her?"

"But Hetty—Hetty Sorrel," said Adam, abruptly, "where is *she*?"

"I know nobody by that name," said the old woman, wonderingly. "Is it anybody ye've heared on at Snowfield?"

"Did there come no young woman here—very young and pretty—Friday was a fortnight, to see Dinah Morris?"

"Nay ; I'n seen no young woman."

"Think ; are you quite sure ? A girl, eighteen years old, with dark eyes and dark curly hair, and a red cloak on, and a basket on her arm ? You couldn't forget her if you saw her."

"Nay ; Friday was a fortnight—it was the day as Dinah went away—there come nobody. There's ne'er been nobody asking for her till you come, for the folks about know as she's gone. Eh dear, eh dear, is there summat the matter ?"

The old woman had seen the ghastly look of fear in Adam's face, but he was not stunned or confounded ; he was thinking eagerly where he could inquire about Hetty.

"Yes ; a young woman started from our country to see Dinah, Friday was a fortnight. I came to fetch her back. I'm afraid something has happened to her. I can't stop. Good-by."

He hastened out of the cottage, and the old woman followed him to the gate, watching him sadly with her shaking head as he almost ran toward the town. He was going to inquire at the place where the Oakbourne coach stopped

No ! no young woman like Hetty had been seen there. Had any accident happened to the coach a fortnight ago ? No. And there was no coach to take him back to Oakbourne that day. Well, he would walk ; he couldn't stay here, in wretched inaction. But the innkeeper, seeing that Adam was in great anxiety, and entering in to this new incident with the eagerness of a man who passes a great deal of time with his hands in his pockets looking into an obstinately monotonous street, offered to take him back to Oakbourne in his own "taxed cart" this very evening. It was not five o'clock ; there was plenty of time for Adam to take a meal,

and yet get to Oakbourne before ten o'clock. The inn-keeper declared that he really wanted to go to Oakbourne, and might as well go to-night; he should have all Monday before him then. Adam, after making an ineffectual attempt to eat, put the food in his pocket, and, drinking a draught of ale, declared himself ready to set off. As they approached the cottage, it occurred to him that he would do well to learn from the old woman where Dinah was to be found in Leeds; if there was trouble at the Hall Farm—he only half admitted the foreboding that there would be—the Poysers might like to send for Dinah. But Dinah had not left any address, and the old woman, whose memory for names was infirm, could not recall the name of the “blessed woman” who was Dinah’s chief friend in the Society at Leeds.

During that long, long journey in the taxed cart, there was time for all the conjectures of importunate fear and struggling hope. In the very first shock of discovering that Hetty had not been to Snowfield, the thought of Arthur had darted through Adam like a sharp pang; but he tried for some time to ward off its return by busying himself with modes of accounting for the alarming fact quite apart from that intolerable thought. Some accident had happened. Hetty had, by some strange chance, got into a wrong vehicle from Oakbourne; she had been taken ill, and did not want to frighten them by letting them know. But this frail fence of vague improbabilities was soon hurled down by a rush of distinct, agonizing fears. Hetty had been deceiving herself in thinking that she could love and marry him; she had been loving Arthur all the while; and now, in her desperation at the nearness of their marriage, she had run away. And she was gone to *him*. The old indignation and jealousy rose again, and prompted the suspicion that Arthur had been dealing falsely—had written to Hetty—had tempted her to come to him—being unwilling, after all, that she should belong to another man besides himself. Perhaps the whole thing had been contrived by him, and he had given her directions how to follow him to Ireland; for Adam knew that Arthur had been gone thither three weeks ago, having recently learned it at the Chase. Every sad look of Hetty’s, since she had been engaged to Adam, returned upon him now with all the exaggeration of painful retrospect. He had been foolishly sanguine and confident. The poor thing hadn’t perhaps known her own mind for a long while; had thought that she could forget Arthur; had been momentarily,

drawn toward the man who offered her a protecting, faithful love. He couldn't bear to blame her; she never meant to cause him this dreadful pain. The blame lay with that man who had selfishly played with her heart—had, perhaps, even deliberately lured her away.

At Oakbourne, the hostler at the Royal Oak remembered such a young woman as Adam described getting out of the Treddleston coach more than a fortnight ago—wasn't likely to forget such a pretty lass as that in a hurry—was sure she had not gone on by the Buxton coach that went through Snowfield, but had lost sight of her while he went away with the horses, and had never set eyes on her again. Adam then went straight to the house from which the Stoniton coach started; Stoniton was the most obvious place for Hetty to go to first, whatever might be her destination, for she would hardly venture on any but the chief coach roads. She had been noticed here too, and was remembered to have sat on the box by the coachman; but the coachman could not be seen, for another man had been driving on the road in his stead the last three or four days; he could probably be seen at Stoniton, through inquiry at the inn where the coach put up. So the anxious, heart-stricken Adam must of necessity wait and try to rest till morning—nay, till eleven o'clock, when the coach started.

At Stoniton another delay occurred, for the old coachman who had driven Hetty would not be in the town again till night. When he did come, he remembered Hetty well, and remembered his own joke addressed to her, quoting it many times to Adam, and observing with equal frequency that he thought there was something more than common, because Hetty had not laughed when he joked with her. But he declared, as the people had done at the inn, that he had lost sight of Hetty directly she got down. Part of the next morning was consumed in inquiries at every house in the town from which a coach started—(all in vain; for you know Hetty did not start from Stoniton by coach, but on foot in the gray morning)—and then in walking out to the first toll-gates on the different lines of road, in the forlorn hope of finding some recollection of her there. No, she was not to be traced any farther; and the next hard task for Adam was to go home, and carry the wretched tidings to the Hall Farm. As to what he should do beyond that, he had come to two distinct resolutions among the tumult of thought and feeling which was going on within him while he went to and fro. He would not

mention what he knew of Arthur Donnithorne's behavior to Hetty till there was a clear necessity for it; it was still possible Hetty might come back, and the necessity might be an injury or an offence to her. And as soon as he had been at home, and done what was necessary there to prepare for his farther absence, he would start off to Ireland; if he found no trace of Hetty on the road, he would go straight to Arthur Donnithorne, and make himself certain how far he was acquainted with her movements. Several times the thought occurred to him that he would consult Mr. Irwine; but that would be useless, unless he told him all, and so betrayed the secret about Arthur. It seems strange that Adam, in the incessant occupation of his mind about Hetty, should never have alighted on the probability that she had gone to Windsor, ignorant that Arthur was no longer there. Perhaps the reason was, that he could not conceive Hetty's throwing herself on Arthur uncalled; he imagined no cause that could have driven her to such a step, after that letter written to her in August. There were but two alternatives in his mind: either Arthur had written to her again, and enticed her away, or she had simply fled from her approaching marriage with himself, because she found out after all, she could not love him well enough, and yet was afraid of her friends' anger if she retracted.

With this last determination on his mind, of going straight to Arthur, the thought that he had spent two days in inquiries which had proved to be almost useless was torturing to Adam; and yet, since he would not tell the Poysers his conviction as to where Hetty was gone, or his intention to follow her thither, he must be able to say to them that he had traced her as far as possible.

It was after twelve o'clock on Tuesday night when Adam reached Treddlestone; and unwilling to disturb his mother and Seth, and also to encounter their questions at that hour, he threw himself without undressing on a bed at the "Wagon Overthrown," and slept hard from pure weariness. Not more than four hours, however; for before five o'clock he set out on his way home in the faint morning twilight. He always kept a key of the workshop door in his pocket, so that he could let himself in; and he wished to enter without awaking his mother, for he was anxious to avoid telling her the new trouble himself, by seeing Seth first, and asking him to tell her when it should be necessary. He walked gently along the yard, and turned the key gently in the door; but, as he

expected, Gyp, who lay in the workshop, gave a sharp bark. It subsided when he saw Adam, holding up his finger at him to impose silence ; and in his dumb, tailless joy he must content himself with rubbing his body against his master's legs.

Adam was too heart-sick to take notice of Gyp's fondling. He threw himself on the bench, and stared dully at the wood and the signs of work around him, wondering if he should ever ~~come to feel pleasure in them again~~ ; while Gyp, dimly aware that there was something wrong with his master, laid his rough gray head on Adam's knee, and wrinkled his brows to look up at him. Hitherto, since Sunday afternoon, Adam had been constantly among strange people and in strange places, having no associations with the details of his daily life, and now that by the light of this new morning he was come back to his home, and surrounded by the familiar objects that seemed forever robbed of their charm, the reality—the hard, inevitable reality of his troubles pressed upon him with a new weight. Right before him was an unfinished chest of drawers, which he had been making in spare moments for Hetty's use when his home should be hers.

Seth had not heard Adam's entrance, but he had been roused by Gyp's bark, and Adam heard him moving about in the room above, dressing himself. Seth's first thoughts were about his brother ; he would come home to-day, surely, for the business would be wanting him sadly by to-morrow, but it was pleasant to think he had had a longer holiday than he had expected. And would Dinah come too ? Seth felt that that was the greatest happiness he could look forward to for himself, though he had no hope left that she would ever love him well enough to marry him ; but he had often said to himself, it was better to be Dinah's friend and brother than any other woman's husband. If he could but be always near her, instead of living so far off !

He came down stairs and opened the inner door leading from the house-place into the workshop, intending to let out Gyp ; but he stood still in the doorway, smitten with a sudden shock at the sight of Adam seated listlessly on the bench, pale, unwashed, with sunken blank eyes, almost like a drunkard in the morning. But Seth felt in an instant what the marks meant ; not drunkenness, but some great calamity. Adam looked up at him without speaking, and Seth moved forward toward the bench, himself trembling so that speech did not come readily.

"God have mercy on us, Addy," he said in a low voice, sitting down on the bench beside Adam, "what is it ?"

Adam was unable to speak ; the strong man, accustomed to suppress the signs of sorrow, had felt his heart swell like a child's at the first approach of sympathy. He fell on Seth's neck and sobbed.

Seth was prepared for the worst, now, for, even in his recollections of their boyhood, Adam had never sobbed before.

"Is it death, Adam? Is she dead?" he asked, in a low tone, when Adam raised his head and was recovering himself. "No, lad; but she's gone—gone away from us. She's never been to Snowfield. Dinah's been gone to Leeds ever since last Friday was a fortnight, the very day Hetty set out. I can't find out where she went after she got to Stoniton."

Seth was silent from utter astonishment ; he knew nothing that could suggest a reason to him for Hetty's going away.

"Hast any notion what she's done it for?" he said, at last.

"She can't ha' loved me ; she didn't like our marriage when it came nigh—that must be it," said Adam. He had determined to mention no farther reason.

"I hear mother stirring," said Seth. "Must we tell her?"

"No, not yet," said Adam, rising from the bench, and pushing the hair from his face, as if he wanted to rouse himself. "I can't have her told yet ; and I must set out on another journey directly, after I've been to the village and th' Hall Farm. I can't tell thee where I'm going, and thee must say to her I'm gone on business as nobody is to know anything about. I'll go and wash myself now." Adam moved toward the door of the workshop, but after a step or two he turned round, and meeting Seth's eyes with a calm sad glance, he said, "I must take all the money out o' the tin box, lad ; but if anything happens to me, all the rest 'll be thine, to take care o' mother with."

Seth was pale and trembling ; he felt there was some terrible secret under all this. "Brother," he said, faintly—he never called Adam "brother," except in solemn moments—"I don't believe you'll do anything as you can't ask God's blessing on."

"Nay, lad," said Adam, "don't be afraid. I'm for doing nought but what's a man's duty."

The thought that if he betrayed his trouble to his mother she would only distress him by words, half of blundering affection, half of irrepressible triumph that Hetty proved as unfit to be his wife as she had always foreseen, brought back some of his habitual firmness and self-command. He had felt ill on his journey home—he told her when she came down—had staid

all night at Treddleston for that reason ; and a bad headache, that still hung about him this morning, accounted for his paleness and heavy eyes.

He determined to go to the villiage, in the first place, attend to his business for an hour, and give notice to Burge of his being obliged to go on a journey, which he must beg him not to mention to any one ; for he wished to avoid going to the Hall Farm near breakfast-time, when the children and servants would be in the house-place, and there must be exclamations in their hearing about his having returned without Hetty. He waited until the clock struck nine before he left the work-yard at the village, and set off, through the fields, toward the Farm. It was an immense relief to him, as he came near the Home Close, to see Mr. Poyser advancing toward him, for this would spare him the pain of going to the house. Mr. Poyser was walking briskly this March morning, with a sense of Spring business on his mind ; he was going to cast the master's eye on the shoeing of a new cart-horse, carrying his spud as a useful companion by the way. His surprise was great when he caught sight of Adam, but he was not a man given to presentiments of evil.

"Why, Adam, lad, is't you? Han ye been all this time away and not brought the lasses back, after all? Where are they?"

"No, I've not brought 'em," said Adam, turning round to indicate that he wished to walk back with Mr. Poyser.

"Why," said Martin, looking with sharper attention at Adam, "ye look bad. Is there anything happened?"

"Yes," said Adam, heavily. "A sad thing's happened. I didna find Hetty at Snowfield."

Mr. Poyser's good-natured face showed signs of troubled astonishment. "Not find her? What's happened to her?" he said, his thoughts flying at once to bodily accident.

"That I can't tell, whether anything's happened to her. She never went to Snowfield—she took the coach to Stoniton, but I can't learn nothing of her after she got down from the Stoniton coach."

"Why, you donna mean she's run away?" said Martin, standing still so puzzled and bewildered that the fact did not yet make itself felt as a trouble by him.

"She must ha' done," said Adam. "She didn't like our marriage when it came to the point—that must be it. She'd mistook her feelings."

Martin was silent for a minute or two, looking on the ground

and rooting up the grass with his spud, without knowing what he was doing. His usual slowness was always trebled when the subject of speech was painful. At last he looked up, right in Adam's face, saying,

"Then she didna deserve t' ha' ye, my lad. An' I feel i' fault myself, for she was my niece, and I was allays hot for her marr'ing ye. There's no amends I can make ye, lad—the more's the pity; it's a sad cut-up for ye, I doubt."

Adam could say nothing; and Mr. Poyser, after pursuing his walk for a little while, went on:

"I'll be bound she's gone after trying to get a lady's-maid's place, for she'd got that in her head half a year ago, and wanted me to gi' my consent. But I'd thought better on her," he added, shaking his head slowly and sadly—"I'd thought better on her nor to look for this, after she'd gi'en y' her word, an' everything had been got ready."

Adam had the strongest motives for encouraging this supposition in Mr. Poyser and he even tried to believe that it might possibly be true. He had no warrant for the *certainty* that she was gone to Arthur.

"It was better as it should be so," he said, as quietly as he could, "if she felt she couldn't like me for a husband. Better run away before than repent after. I hope you won't look harshly on her if she comes back, as she may do if she finds it hard to get on away from home."

"I canna look on her as I'n done before," said Martin, decisively. "She's acted bad by you, and by all on us. But I'll not turn my back on her; she's but a young un, and it's the first harm I'n knowed on her. It'll be a hard job for me to tell her aunt. Why didna Dinah come back wi' ye? She'd ha' helped to pacify her aunt a bit."

"Dinah wasn't at Snowfield. She's been gone to Leeds this fortnight; and I couldn't learn from th' old woman any direction where she is at Leeds, else I should ha' brought it you."

"She'd a deal better be staying wi' her own kin," said Mr. Poyser, indignantly, "than going preeching among strange folks a-t'at-'n."

"I must leave you now, Mr. Poyser," said Adam, "for I've a deal to see to."

"Ay, you'd best be after your business, and I must tell the missis when I go home. It's a hard job."

"But," said Adam, "I beg particular you'll keep what's

happened quiet for a week or two. I've not told my mother yet, and there's no knowing how things may turn out."

"Ay, ay ; least said, soonest mended. We'n no need to say why the match is broke off, an' we may hear of her after a bit. Shake hands wi' me, lad ; I wished I could make thee amends."

There was something in Martin Poyser's throat at that moment which caused him to bring out those scanty words in rather a broken fashion. Yet Adam knew what they meant all the better ; and the two honest men grasped each other's hard hands in mutual understanding.

There was nothing now to hinder Adam from setting off. He had told Seth to go to the Chase, and leave a message for the squire, saying that Adam Bede had been obliged to start off suddenly on a journey—and to say as much, and no more, to any one else who made inquiries about him. If the Poyzers learned that he was gone away again, Adam knew they would infer that he was gone in search of Hetty.

He had intended to go right on his way from the Hall Farm ; but now the impulse which had frequently visited him before—to go to Mr. Irwine, and make a confidant of him—recurred with the new force which belongs to a last opportunity. He was about to start on a long journey—a difficult one—by sea—and no soul would know where he was gone. If anything happened to him ? or, if he absolutely needed help in any matter concerning Hetty ? Mr. Irwine was to be trusted ; and the feeling which made Adam shrink from telling anything which was *her* secret, must give way before the need there was that she should have some one else besides himself, who would be prepared to defend her in the worst extremity. Toward Arthur, even though he might have incurred no new guilt, Adam felt that he was not bound to keep silence when Hetty's interest called on him to speak.

"I must do it," said Adam, when these thoughts, which had spread themselves through hours of his sad journeying, now rushed upon him in an instant, like a wave that had been slowly gathering ; "it's the right thing. I can't stand alone in this way any longer."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE TIDINGS.

ADAM turned his face toward Broxton, and walked with his swiftest stride, looking at his watch with the fear that Mr. Irwine might be gone out—hunting, perhaps. The fear and haste together produced a state of strong excitement before he reached the Rectory gate ; and outside it he saw the deep marks of a recent hoof on the gravel.

But the hoofs were turned toward the gate, not away from it ; and though there was a horse against the stable door, it was not Mr. Irwine's ; it had evidently had a journey this morning, and must belong to some one who had come on business. Mr. Irwine was at home, then ; but Adam could hardly find breath and calmness to tell Carrol that he wanted to speak to the rector. The double suffering of certain and uncertain sorrow had begun to shake the strong man. The butler looked at him wonderingly, as he threw himself on a bench in the passage and stared absently at the clock on the opposite wall ; the master had somebody with him, he said, but heard the study door open—the stranger seemed to be coming out, and as Adam was in a hurry, he would let the master know at once.

Adam sat looking at the clock ; the minute-hand was hurrying along the last five minutes to ten, with a loud, hard, indifferent tick, and Adam watched the movement and listened to the sound as if he had had some reason for doing so. In our times of bitter suffering, there are almost always these pauses, when our consciousness is benumbed to everything but some trivial preception or sensation. It is as if semi-idiocy came to give us rest from the memory and the dread which refuse to leave us in our sleep.

Carrol coming back, recalled Adam to the sense of his burden. He was to go into the study immediately. "I can't think what that strange person's come about," the butler added, from mere incontinence of remark, as he preceded Adam to the door ; "he's gone i' the dining-room. And master looks unaccountable—as if he was frightened." Adam took no notice of the words ; he could not care about other people's business. But when he entered the study and looked

in Mr. Irwine's face, he felt in an instant that there was a new expression in it, strangely different from the warm friendliness it had always worn for him before. A letter lay open on the table, and Mr. Irwine's hand was on it; but the changed glance he cast on Adam could not be owing entirely to preoccupation with some disagreeable business, for he was looking eagerly toward the door, as if Adam's entrance was a matter of poignant anxiety to him.

"You want to speak to me, Adam," he said, in that low, constrainedly quiet tone which a man uses when he is determined to suppress agitation. "Sit down here." He pointed to a chair just opposite to him, at no more than a yard's distance from his own, and Adam sat down with a sense that this cold manner of Mr. Irwine's gave an additional unexpected difficulty to his disclosure. But when Adam had made up his mind to a measure, he was not the man to renounce it for any but imperative reasons.

"I come to you, sir," he said, "as the gentleman I look up to most of anybody. "I've something very painful to tell you—something as it'll pain you to hear as well as me to tell. But if I speak o' the wrong other people have done, you'll see I didn't speak till I'd good reason."

Mr. Irwine nodded slowly, and Adam went on rather tremulously.

"You was t' ha' married me and Hetty Sorrel, you know, sir, o' the fifteenth o' this month. I thought she loved me, and I was th' happiest man i' th' parish. But a dreadful blow's come upon me."

Mr. Irwine started up from his chair, as if involuntarily, but then, determined to control himself, walked to the window and looked out.

"She's gone away, sir, and we don't know where. She said she was going to Snowfield o' Friday was a fortnight, and I went last Sunday to fetch her back; but she'd never been there, and she took the coach to Stoniton, and beyond that I can't trace her. But now I'm going a long journey to look for her, and I can't trust to anybody but you where I'm going."

Mr. Irwine came back from the window and sat down.

"Have you no idea of the reason why she went away?" he said

"It's plain enough she didn't want to marry me, sir," said Adam. "She didn't like it when it came so near. But that isn't all, I doubt. There's something else I must tell you, sir. There's somebody else concerned besides me."

A gleam of something—it was almost like relief or joy—came across the eager anxiety of Mr. Irwine's face at that moment. Adam was looking on the ground, and paused a little: the next words were hard to speak. But when he went on, he lifted up his head and looked straight at Mr. Irwine. He would do the thing he had resolved to do without flinching.

"You know who's the man I've reckoned my greatest friend," he said, "and used to be proud to think as I should pass my life i' working for him, and had felt so ever since we were lads" . . .

Mr. Irwine, as if all self-control had forsaken him, grasped Adam's arm, which lay on the table, and, clutching it tightly like a man in pain, said, with pale lips and a low, hurried voice.

"No, Adam, no; don't say it, for God's sake!"

Adam, surprised at the violence of Mr. Irwine's feeling, repented of the words that had passed his lips, and sat in distressed silence. The grasp on his arm gradually relaxed, and Mr. Irwine threw himself back in his chair, saying, "Go on—I must know it."

"That man played with Hetty's feelings, and behaved to her as he'd no right to do to a girl in her station o' life—made her presents, and used to go and meet her out a-walking: I found it out only two days before he went away—found him a-kissing her as they were parting in the Grove. There'd been nothing said between me and Hetty then, though I'd loved her for a long while, and she knew it. But I reproached him with his wrong actions, and words and blows passed between us; and he said solemnly to me, after that, as it had been all nonsense, and no more than a bit o' flirting. But I made him write a letter to tell Hetty he'd meant nothing; for I saw clear enough, sir, by several things as I hadn't understood at the time, as he'd got hold of her heart, and I thought she'd belike go on thinking of him, and never come to love another man as wanted to marry her. And I gave her the letter, and she seemed to bear it all after a while better than I'd expected . . . and she behaved kinder and kinder to me . . . I dare say she didn't know her own feelings then, poor thing, and they came back upon her when it was too late . . . I don't want to blame her . . . I can't think as she meant to deceive me. But I was encouraged to think she loved me, and—you know the rest, sir. But it's on my mind as he's been false to me, and ticed her away, and she's gone to him

—and I'm going now to see; for I can never go to work again till I know what's become of her."

During Adam's narrative, Mr. Irwine had had time to recover his self-mastery in spite of the painful thoughts that crowded upon him. It was a bitter remembrance to him now—that morning when Arthur breakfasted with him, and seemed as if he were on the verge of a confession. It was plain enough *now* what he had wanted to confess. And if their words had taken another turn . . . if he himself had been less fastidious about intruding on another man's secrets . . . it was cruel to think how thin a film had shut out rescue from all this guilt and misery. He saw the whole history now by that terrible illumination which the present sheds back upon the past. But every other feeling as it rushed upon him was thrown into abeyance by pity, deep respectful pity, for the man who sat before him—already so bruised, going forth with sad blind resignedness to an unreal sorrow, while a real one was close upon him, too far beyond the range of common trial for him ever to have feared it. His own agitation was quelled by a certain awe that comes over us in the presence of a great anguish; for the anguish he must inflict on Adam was already present to him. Again he put his hand on the arm that lay on the table, but very gently this time, as he said solemnly,

"Adam, my dear friend, you have had some hard trials in your life. You can bear sorrow manfully, as well as act manfully: God requires both tasks at our hands. And there is a heavier sorrow coming upon you than any you have yet known. But you are not guilty—you have not the worst of all sorrows. God help him who has!"

The two pale faces looked at each other; in Adam's there was trembling suspense, in Mr. Irwine's hesitating, shrinking pity. But he went on.

"I have had news of Hetty this morning. She is not gone to *him*. She is in Stonyshire—at Stoniton."

Adam started up from his chair, as if he thought he could have leaped to her that moment. But Mr. Irwine laid hold of his arm again, and said, persuasively, "Wait, Adam wait." So he sat down.

"She is in a very unhappy position—one which will make it worse for you to find her, my poor friend, than to have lost her forever."

Adam's lips moved tremulously, but no sound came. They moved again, and whispered, "Tell me."

"She has been arrested . . . she is in prison."

It was as if an insulting blow had brought back the spirit of resistance into Adam. The blood rushed to his face, and he said loudly and sharply,

"For what?"

"For a great crime—the murder of her child."

"It *can't be!*" Adam almost shouted, starting up from his chair, and making a stride toward the door; but he turned round again, setting his back against the book-case, and looking fiercely at Mr. Irwine. "It isn't possible. She never had a child. She can't be guilty. *Who* says it?"

"God grant she may be innocent, Adam. We can still hope she is."

"But who says she is guilty?" said Adam, violently. "Tell me everything."

"Here is a letter from the magistrate before whom she was taken, and the constable who arrested her is in the dining-room. She will not confess her name or where she comes from; but I fear, I fear there can be no doubt it is Hetty. The description of her person corresponds, only that she is said to look very pale and ill. She had a small red-leather pocket-book in her pocket, with two names written in it—one at the beginning, 'Hetty Sorrel, Hayslope,' and the other near the end, 'Dinah Morris, Snowfield.' She will not say which is her own name—she denies everything, and will answer no questions; and application has been made to me, as a magistrate, that I may take measures for identifying her, for it was thought probable that the name which stands first is her own name."

"But what proof have they got against her, if it is Hetty?" said Adam, still violently, with an effort that seemed to shake his whole frame. "I'll not believe. It couldn't ha' been, and none of us know it."

"Terrible proof that she was under the temptation to commit the crime; but we have room to hope that she did not really commit it. Try and read that letter, Adam."

Adam took the letter between his shaking hands, and tried to fix his eyes steadily on it. Mr. Irwine meanwhile went out to give some orders. When he came back, Adam's eyes were still on the first page—he couldn't read—he could not put the words together and make out what they meant. He threw it down at last, and clenched his fist.

"It's *his* doing," he said; "if there's been any crime, it's at his door, not at hers. *He* taught her to deceive—he de-

ceived me first. Let 'em put *him* on his trial—let him stand in court beside her, and I'll tell 'em how he got hold of her heart, and 'ticed her t' evil, and then lied to me. Is *he* to go free, while they lay all the punishment on her . . . so weak and young?"

The image called up by these last words gave a new direction to poor Adam's maddened feelings. He was silent, looking at the corner of the room, as if he saw something there. Then he burst out again, in a tone of appealing anguish.

"I *can't* bear it . . . O God, it's too hard to lay upon me—it's too hard to think she's wicked."

Mr. Irwine had sat down again in silence; he was too wise to utter soothing words at present, and indeed the sight of Adam before him, with that look of sudden age which sometimes comes over a young face in moments of terrible emotion—the hard bloodless look of the skin, the deep lines about the quivering mouth, the furrows in the brow—the sight of this strong firm man shattered by the invisible stroke of sorrow, moved him so deeply that speech was not easy. Adam stood motionless, with his eyes vacantly fixed in this way for a minute or two; in that short space he was living through all his love again.

"She can't ha' done it," he said, still without moving his eyes, as if he were only talking to himself; "it was fear made her hide it . . . I forgive her for deceiving me . . . I forgive thee, Hetty . . . thee wast deceived too . . . it's gone hard wi' thee, my poor Hetty . . . but they'll never make me believe it."

He was silent again for a few moments, and then he said with fierce abruptness,

"I'll go to him—I'll bring him back—I'll make him go and look at her in her misery—he shall look at her till he can't forget it—it shall follow him night and day—as long as he lives it shall follow him—he shan't escape wi' lies this time—I'll fetch him, I'll drag him myself."

In the act of going toward the door, Adam paused automatically and looked about for his hat, quite unconscious where he was, or who was present with him. Mr. Irwine had followed him, and now took him by the arm, saying in a quiet, but decided tone,

"No, Adam, no; I'm sure you will wish to stay and see what good can be done for *her*, instead of going on a useless errand of vengeance. The punishment will surely fall without your aid. Besides, he is no longer in Ireland; he must be on

his way home—or would be long before you arrived ; for his grandfather, I know, wrote for him to come at least ten days ago. I want you now to go with me to Stoniton. I have ordered a horse for you to ride with us, as soon as you can compose yourself.”

While Mr. Irwine was speaking, Adam recovered his consciousness of the actual scene ; he rubbed his hair off his forehead and listened.

“Remember,” Mr. Irwine went on, “there are others to think of, and act for, besides yourself, Adam ; there are Hetty’s friends, the good Poysers, on whom this stroke will fall more heavily than I can bear to think. I expect it from your strength of mind, Adam—from your sense of duty to God and man—that you will try to act as long as action can be of any use.”

In reality, Mr. Irwine proposed this journey to Stoniton for Adam’s own sake. Movement, with some object before him, was the best means of counteracting the violence of suffering in these first hours.

“You *will* go with me to Stoniton, Adam ?” he said again, after a moment’s pause. “We have to see if it is really Hetty who is there, you know.”

“Yes, sir,” said Adam, “I’ll do what you think right. But the folks at th’ Hall Farm ?”

“I wish them not to know till I return to tell them myself. I shall have ascertained things then which I am uncertain about now, and I shall return as soon as possible. Come now, the horses are ready.”

CHAPTER XL.

THE BITTER WATERS SPREAD.

MR. IRWINE returned from Stoniton in a post-chaise that night, and the first words Carrol said to him, as he entered the house, were, that Squire Donnithorne was dead—found dead in his bed at ten o’clock that morning—and that Mrs. Irwine desired him to say she should be awake when Mr. Irwine came home, and she begged him not to go to bed without seeing her.

"Well, Dauphin," Mrs. Irwine said, as her son entered her room, "you're come at last. So the old gentleman's fidgetiness and low spirits, which made him send for Arthur in that sudden way, really meant something. I suppose Carrol has told you that Donnithorne was found dead in his bed this morning. You will believe my prognostications another time, though I dare say I shan't live to prognosticate anything but my own death."

"What have they done about Arthur?" said Mr. Irwine. "Sent a messenger to await him at Liverpool?"

"Yes, Ralph was gone before the news was brought to us. Dear Arthur, I shall live now to see him master at the Chase, and making good times on the estate, like a generous-hearted fellow as he is. He'll be as happy as a king now."

Mr. Irwine could not help giving a slight groan: he was worn with anxiety and exertion, and his mother's light words were almost intolerable.

"What are you so dismal about, Dauphin? Is there any bad news? Or are you thinking of the danger for Arthur in crossing that frightful Irish Channel at this time of year?"

"No, mother, I'm not thinking of that; but I'm not prepared to rejoice just now."

"You've been worried by this law business that you've been to Stoniton about. What in the world is it, that you can't tell me?"

"You will know by and by, mother. It would not be right for me to tell you at present. Good-night: you'll sleep now you have no longer anything to listen for."

Mr. Irwine gave up his intention of sending a letter to meet Arthur, since it would not now hasten his return: the news of his grandfather's death would bring him as soon as he could possibly come. He could go to bed now and get some needful rest, before the time came for the morning's heavy duty of carrying his sickening news to the Hall Farm and to Adam's home.

Adam himself was not come back from Stoniton, for though he shrank from seeing Hetty, he could not bear to go to a distance from her again.

"It's no use, sir," he said to the rector—"it's no use for me to go back. I can't go to work again while she's here; and I couldn't bear the sight o' the things and folks round home. I'll take a bit of a room here, where I can see the prison walls, and perhaps I shall get, in time, to bear seeing her."

Adam had not been shaken in his belief that Hetty was innocent of the crime she was charged with, for Mr. Irwine, feeling that the belief in her guilt would be a crushing addition to Adam's load, had kept from him the facts which left no hope in his own mind. There was not any reason for thrusting the whole burden on Adam at once, and Mr. Irwine, at parting, only said, "If the evidence should tell too strongly against her, Adam, we may still hope for a pardon. Her youth and other circumstances will be a plea for her."

"Ah! and it's right people should know how she was tempted into the wrong way," said Adam, with bitter earnestness. "It's right they should know it was a fine gentleman made love to her, and turned her head wi' notions. You'll remember, sir, you've promised to tell my mother, and Seth, and the people at the Farm, who it was as led her wrong, else they'll think harder of her than she deserves. You'll be doing her a hurt by sparing him, and I hold him the guiltiest before God, let her ha' done what she may. If you spare him, I'll expose him!"

"I think your demand is just, Adam," said Mr. Irwine, "but when you are calmer, you will judge Arthur more mercifully. I say nothing now, only that his punishment is in other hands than ours."

Mr. Irwine felt it hard upon him that he should have to tell of Arthur's sad part in the story of sin and sorrow—he who cared for Arthur with fatherly affection—who had cared for him with fatherly pride. But he saw clearly that the secret must be known before long, even apart from Adam's determination, since it was scarcely to be supposed that Hetty would persist to the end in her obstinate silence. He made up his mind to withhold nothing from the Poyzers, but to tell them the worst at once, for there was no time to rob the tidings of their suddenness. Hetty's trial must come on at the Lent assizes, and they were to be held at Stoniton the next week. It was scarcely to be hoped that Martin Poyser could escape the pain of being called as a witness, and it was better he should know everything as long beforehand as possible.

Before ten o'clock on Thursday morning the home at the Hall Farm was a house of mourning for a misfortune felt to be worse than death. The sense of family dishonor was too keen, even in the kind-hearted Martin Poyser the younger, to leave room for any compassion toward Hetty. He and his father were simple-minded farmers, proud of their untarnished character, proud that they came of a family which had held

up its head and paid its way as far back as its name was in the parish register ; and Hetty had brought disgrace on them all—disgrace that could never be wiped out. That was the all-conquering feeling in the mind both of father and son—the scorching sense of disgrace, which neutralized all other sensibility ; and Mr. Irwine was struck with surprise to observe that Mrs. Poyser was less severe than her husband. We are often startled by the severity of mild people on exceptional occasions ; the reason is, that mild people are most likely to be under the yoke of traditional impressions.

“ I’m willing to pay any money as is wanted toward trying to get her off,” said Martin the younger, when Mr. Irwine was gone, while the old grandfather was crying in the opposite chair, “ but I’ll not go nigh her, nor ever see her again, by my own will. She’s made our bread bitter to us for all our lives to come, an’ we shall ne’er hold up our heads i’ this parish nor i’ any other. The parson talks of folks pityin’ us ; it’s poor amends pity ’ll make us.”

“ Pity ! ” said the grandfather, sharply. “ I ne’er wanted folks’s pity i’ *my* life afore . . . an’ I mun begin to be looked down on now, an’ me turned seventy-two last St. Thomas’s, an’ all th’ under-bearers and pall-bearers as I’n picked for my funeral are i’ this parish an’ the next to ’t. . . . It’s o’ no use now. . . . I mun be ta’en to the grave by strangers.”

“ Don’t fret so, father,” said Mrs. Poyser, who had spoken very little, being almost overawed by her husband’s unusual hardness and decision. “ You’ll have your children wi’ you ; and there’s the lads and the little un ’ll grow up in a new parish as well as i’ th’ old un.”

“ Ah ! there’s no staying i’ this country for us now,” said Mr. Poyser, and the hard tears trickled slowly down his round cheeks. “ We thought it ’ud be bad luck if th’ old squire gave us notice this Lady-day, but I must gi’ notice myself now, an’ see if there can anybody be got to come an’ take to the crops as I’n put i’ the ground ; for I wonna stay upo’ that man’s land a day longer nor I’m forced to ’t. An’ me, as thought him such a good, upright young man, as I should be be glad when he come to be our landlord. I’ll ne’er lift my hat to ’m again, nor sit i’ the same church wi’ ’m . . . a man as has brought shame on respectable folks . . . an’ pretended to be such a friend to everybody. . . . Poor Adam there . . . a fine friend he’s been t’ Adam, making speeches an’ talking so fine, an’ all the while poisonin’ the lad’s life, as it’s much if he can stay i’ this country any more nor we can.”

"An' you t' ha' to go into court and own you're akin t' her," said the old man. "Why, they'll cast it up to the little un as isn't four 'ear old, some day—they'll cast it up t' her as she'd a cousin tried at the 'sizes for murder."

"It'll be their own wickedness, then," said Mrs. Poyser, with a sob in her voice. "But there's one above 'ull take care of the innocent child, else it's but little truth they tell us at church. It'll be harder nor ever to die an' leave the little uns, an' nobody to be a mother to 'm."

"We'd better ha' sent for Dinah, if we'd known where she is," said Mr. Poyser; "but Adam said she'd left no direction where she'd be at Leeds."

"Why, she'd be wi' that woman as was a friend to her Aunt Mary," said Mrs. Poyser, comforted a little by this suggestion of her husband's. "I've often heard Dinah talk of her, but I can't remember what name she called her by. But there's Seth Bede; he's like enough to know, for she's a preaching woman as the Methodists think a deal on."

"I'll send to Seth," said Mr. Poyser. "I'll send Alick to tell him to come, or else to send us word o' the woman's name, an' thee can'st write a letter ready to send off to Treddles'on as soon as we can make out a direction."

"It's poor work writing letters when you want folks to come to you i' trouble," said Mrs. Poyser. "Happen it'll be ever so long on the road, an' never reach her at last."

Before Alick arrived with the message, Lisbeth's thoughts too had already flown to Dinah, and she had said to Seth.

"Eh! there's no comfort for us i' this world any more, wi'out thee couldst get Dinah Morris to come to us, as she did when my old man died. I'd like her to come in an' take me by the hand again, an' talk to me; she'd tell me the rights on't belike—she'd happen to know some good i' all this trouble an' heartbreak comin' upo' that poor lad, as ne'er done a bit o' wrong in's life, but war better nor anybody else's son, pick the country round. Eh! my lad . . . Adam, my poor lad!"

"Thee wouldstna like me to leave thee, to go and fetch Dinah?" said Seth, as his mother sobbed, and rocked herself to and fro.

"Fetch her?" said Lisbeth, looking up, and pausing from her grief, like a crying child who hears some promise of consolation. "Why, what place is't she's at, do they say?"

"It's a good way off, mother—Leeds, a big town. But I could be back in three days, if thee couldst spare me."

"Nay, nay, I canna spare thee. Thee must go an' see thy brother, an' bring me word what he's a-doin'. Mester Irwine said he'd come and tell me, but I canna make out so well what it means when he tells me. Thee must go thysen sin' Adam wanna let me go to 'm. Write a letter to Dinah, canstna? Thee't fond enough o' writing when nobody wants thee."

"I'm not sure where she'd be i' that big town," said Seth. "If I'd gone myself, I could ha' found out by asking the members o' the society. But perhaps, if I put Sarah Williamson, Methodist preacher, Leeds, o' th' outside, it might get to her, for most like she'd be wi' Sarah Williamson."

Alick came now with the message, and Seth, finding that Mrs. Poyser was writing to Dinah, gave up the intention of writing himself; but he went to the Hall Farm to tell them all he could suggest about the address of the letter, and warn them that there might be some delay in the delivery, from his not knowing an exact direction.

On leaving Lisbeth Mr. Irwine had gone to Jonathan Burge, who had also a claim to be acquainted with what was likely to keep Adam away from business for some time; and before six o'clock that evening there were few people in Broxton and Hayslope who had not heard the sad news. Mr. Irwine had not mentioned Arthur's name to Burge, and yet the story of his conduct toward Hetty, with all the dark shadows cast upon it by its terrible consequences, was presently as well known as that his grandfather was dead, and he was come into the estate. For Martin Poyser felt no motive to keep silence toward the one or two neighbors who ventured to come and shake him sorrowfully by the hand on the first day of his trouble; and Carrol, who kept his ears open to all that passed at the Rectory, had framed an inferential version of the story, and found early opportunities of communicating it.

One of those neighbors who came to Martin Poyser, and shook him by the hand without speaking for some minutes, was Bartle Massey. He had shut up his school, and was on his way to the Rectory, where he arrived about half past seven in the evening, and, sending his duty to Mr. Irwine, begged pardon for troubling him at that hour, but he had something particular on his mind. He was shown into the study, where Mr. Irwine soon joined him.

"Well, Bartle?" said Mr. Irwine, putting out his hand,

That was not his usual way of saluting the schoolmaster, but trouble makes us treat all who feel with us very much alike. "Sit down."

"You know what I'm come about as well as I do, sir, I dare say," said Bartle.

"You wish to know the truth about the sad news that has reached you . . . about Hetty Sorrel?"

"Nay, sir, what I wish to know is about Adam Bede. I understand you left him at Stoniton, and I beg the favor of you to tell me what's the state of the poor lad's mind, and what he means to do. For, as for that bit o' pink-and-white they've taken the trouble to put in jail, I don't value her a rotten nut—not a rotten nut—only for the harm or good that may come out of her to an honest man—a lad I've set such store by—trusted to that he'd make my bit o' knowledge go a good way in the world. . . . Why, sir, he's the only scholar I've had in this stupid country that ever had the will or the head-piece for mathematics. If he hadn't had so much hard-work to do, poor fellow, he might have gone into the higher branches, and then this might never have happened—might never have happened."

Bartle was heated by the exertion of walking fast in an agitated frame of mind, and was not able to check himself on this first occasion of venting his feelings. But he paused now to rub his moist forehead, and probably his moist eyes also.

"You'll excuse me, sir," he said, when this pause had given him time to reflect, "for running on in this way about my own feelings, like that foolish dog of mine, howling in a storm, when there's nobody wants to listen to me. I came to hear you speak, not to talk myself, if you'll take the trouble to tell me what the poor lad's doing."

"Don't put yourself under any restraint, Bartle," said Mr. Irwine. "The fact is, I'm very much in the same condition as you just now; I've a great deal that's painful on my mind, and I find it hard work to be quite silent about my own feelings, and only attend to others. I share your concern for Adam, though he is not the only one whose sufferings I care for in this affair. He intends to remain at Stoniton till after the trial: it will come on probably a week to-morrow. He has taken a room there, and I encouraged him to do so, because I think it better he should be away from his own home at present; and, poor fellow, he still believes Hetty is innocent—he wants to summon up courage to see her if he can; he is unwilling to leave the spot where she is."

"Do you think the creatur's guilty, then?" said Bartle.
 "Do you think they'll hang her?"

"I'm afraid it will go hard with her; the evidence is very strong. And one bad symptom is that she denies everything—denies that she has had a child, in the face of the most positive evidence. I saw her myself, and she was obstinately silent to me; she shrank up like a frightened animal when she saw me. I was never so shocked in my life as at the change in her. But I trust that, in the worst case, we may obtain a pardon for the sake of the innocent who are involved."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Bartle forgetting in his irritation to whom he was speaking—"I beg your pardon, sir, I mean it's stuff and nonsense for the innocent to care about her being hanged. For my own part, I think the sooner such women are put out of the world the better; and the men that help 'em to do mischief had better go along with 'em for that matter. What good will you do by keeping such vermin alive, eating the victual that 'ud feed rational beings? But if Adam's fool enough to care about it, I don't want him to suffer more than's needful. . . . Is he very much cut up, poor fellow?" Bartle added, taking out his spectacles and putting them on, as if they would assist his imagination.

"Yes, I'm afraid theg rief cuts very deep," said Mr. Irwine.
 "He looks terribly shattered, and a certain violence came over him now and then yesterday, which made me wish I could have remained near him. But I shall go to Stoniton again to-morrow, and I have confidence enough in the strength of Adam's principle to trust that he will be able to endure the worst without being driven to anything rash.

Mr. Irwine, who was involuntarily uttering his own thoughts rather than addressing Bartle Massey in the last sentence, had in his mind the possibility that the spirit of vengeance toward Arthur, which was the form Adam's anguish was continually taking, might make him seek an encounter that was likely to end more fatally than the one in the Grove. This possibility heightened the anxiety with which he looked forward to Arthur's arrival. But Bartle thought Mr. Irwine was referring to suicide, and his face wore a new alarm.

"I'll tell you what I have in my head, sir," he said, "and I hope you'll approve of it. I'm going to shut up my school; if the scholars come, they must go back again, that's all; and I shall go to Stoniton and look after Adam till this business is over. I'll pretend I'm come to look on at the assizes; he can't object to that. What do you think about it, sir?"

"Well, said Mr. Irwine, rather hesitatingly, "there would be some real advantages in that and I honor you for your friendship toward him, Bartle. But . . . you must be careful what you say to him, you know. I'm afraid you have too little fellow-feeling in what you consider his weakness about Hetty."

"Trust to me, sir—trust to me. I know what you mean. I've been a fool myself in my time, but that's between you and me. I sha'n't thrust myself on him—only keep my eye on him, and see that he gets some good food, and put in a word here and there."

"Then," said Mr. Irwine, reassured a little as to Bartle's discretion, "I think you'll be doing a good deed, and it will be well for you to let Adam's mother and brother know that you're going."

"Yes, sir—yes," said Bartle, rising, and taking off his spectacles, "I'll do that—I'll do that; though the mother's a whimpering thing—I don't like to come within ear-shot of her; however, she's a straight-backed, clean woman—none of your slatterns. I wish you good-by, sir, and thank you for the time you've spared me. You're everybody's friend in this business—everybody's friend. It's a heavy weight you've got on your shoulders."

"Good-by, Bartle, till we meet at Stoniton, as I dare say we shall."

Bartle hurried away from the Rectory, evading Carrol's conversational advances, and saying, in an exasperated tone, to Vixen, whose short legs pattered beside him on the gravel,

"Now, I shall be obliged to take you with me, you good-for-nothing woman. You'd go fretting yourself to death if I left you; you know you would, and perhaps get snapped up by some tramp; and you'll be running into bad company, I expect, putting your nose in every hole and corner where you've no business; but if you do anything disgraceful I'll disown you—mind that, madam—mind that!"

CHAPTER XLI.

THE EVE OF THE TRIAL.

AN upper room in a dull Stoniton street, with two beds in it—one laid on the floor. It is ten o'clock on Thursday night, and the dark wall opposite the window shuts out the moonlight that might have struggled with the light of the one dip candle by which Bartle Massey is pretending to read, while he is really looking over his spectacles at Adam Bede, seated near the dark window.

You would hardly have known it was Adam without being told. His face has got thinner this last week ; he has the sunken eyes, the neglected beard of a man just risen from a sick bed. His heavy black hair hangs over his forehead, and there is no active impulse in him which inclines him to push it off, that he may be more awake to what is around him. He has one arm over the back of the chair, and he seems to be looking down at his clasped hands. He is roused by a knock at the door.

"There he is," said Bartle Massey, rising hastily and unfastening the door. It was Mr. Irwine.

Adam rose from his chair with instinctive respect as Mr. Irwine approached him and took his hand.

"I'm late, Adam," he said, sitting down on the chair which Bartle placed for him ; "but I was later in setting off from Broxton than I intended to be, and I have been incessantly occupied since I arrived. I've done everything now, however—everything that can be done to-night, at least. Let us all sit down."

Adam took his chair again mechanically, and Bartle, for whom there was no chair remaining, sat on the bed in the background.

"Have you seen her, sir?" said Adam, tremulously.

"Yes, Adam ; I and the chaplain have both been with her this evening."

"Did you ask her, sir . . . did you say anything about me?"

"Yes," said Mr. Irwine, with some hesitation, "I spoke of you. I said you wished to see her before the trial, if she consented."

As Mr. Irwine paused, Adam looked at him with eager, questioning eyes.

"You know she shrinks from seeing any one, Adam. It is not only you—some fatal influence seems to have shut up her heart against her fellow-creatures. She has scarcely said anything more than 'No,' either to me or the chaplain. Three or four days ago, before you were mentioned to her, when I asked her if there was any one of her family whom she would like to see—to whom she could open her mind, she said, with a violent shudder, 'Tell them not to come near me—I won't see any of them.'"

Adam's head was hanging down again, and he did not speak. There was silence for a few minutes, and then Mr. Irwine said,

"I don't like to advise you against your own feelings, Adam, if they now urge you strongly to go and see her to-morrow morning, even without her consent. It is just possible, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, that the interview might affect her favorably. But I grieve to say I have scarcely any hope of that. She didn't seem agitated when I mentioned your name; she only said 'No,' in the same cold, obstinate way as usual. And if the meeting had no good effect on her, it would be pure, useless suffering to you—severe suffering, I fear. She is very much changed" . . .

Adam started up from his chair, and seized his hat which lay on the table. But he stood still then, and looked at Mr. Irwine, as if he had a question to ask, which it was yet difficult to utter. Bartle Massey rose quietly, turned the key in the door, and put it in his pocket.

"Is he come back?" said Adam at last.

"No, he is not," said Mr. Irwine, quietly. "Lay down your hat, Adam, unless you would like to walk out with me for a little fresh air. I fear you have not been out again to-day."

"You needn't deceive me, sir," said Adam, looking hard at Mr. Irwine, and speaking in a tone of angry suspicion. "You needn't be afraid of me. I only want justice. I want him to feel what she feels. It's his work. . . she was a child as it 'ud ha' gone t'anybody's heart to look at. . . I don't care what she's done. . . it was him brought her to it. And he shall know it. . . he shall feel it. . . if there's a just God, he shall feel what it is t' ha' brought a child like her to sin and misery" . . .

"I'm not deceiving you, Adam," said Mr. Irwine; "Ar-

thur Donnithorne is not come back—was not come back when I left. I have left a letter for him; he will know all as soon as he arrives."

"But you don't mind about it," said Adam, indignantly. "You think it doesn't matter as she lies there in shame and misery, and he knows nothing about it—he suffers nothing."

"Adam, he *will* know—he *will* suffer, long and bitterly. He has a heart and a conscience; I can't be entirely deceived in his character. I am convinced—I am sure he didn't fall under temptation without a struggle. He may be weak, but he is not callous, not coldly selfish. I am persuaded that this will be a shock of which he will feel the effects all his life. Why do you crave vengeance in this way? No amount of torture that you could inflict on *him* could benefit *her*."

"No—O God, no," Adam groaned out, sinking on his chair again; "but that is the deepest curse of all . . . that's what makes the blackness of it . . . *it can never be undone*. My poor Hetty. . . she can never be my sweet Hetty again. . . the prettiest thing that God had made—smiling up at me . . . I thought she loved me . . . and was good" . . .

Adam's voice had been gradually sinking into a hoarse undertone, as if he were only talking to himself; but now he said abruptly, looking at Mr. Irwine,

"But she isn't as guilty as they say? You don't think she is, sir? She can't ha' done it."

"That perhaps can never be known with certainty, Adam," Mr. Irwine answered, gently. "In these cases we sometimes form our judgment on what seems to us strong evidence, and yet, for want of knowing some small fact, our judgment is wrong. But suppose the worst; you have no right to say that the guilt of her crime lies with him, and that he ought to bear the punishment. It is not for us men to apportion the shares of moral guilt and retribution. We find it impossible to avoid mistakes even in determining who has committed a single criminal act, and the problem how far a man is to be held responsible for the unforeseen consequences of his own deed, is one that might well make us tremble to look into it. The evil consequences that may lie folded in a single act of selfish indulgence, is a thought so awful that it ought surely to awaken some feeling less presumptuous than a rash desire to punish. You have a mind that can understand this fully, Adam, when you are calm. Don't suppose I can't enter into the anguish that drives you into this state of revengeful hatred; but think of this: if you were to obey your passion—

for it *is* passion, and you deceive yourself in calling it justice—it might be with you precisely as it has been with Arthur; nay, worse; your passion might lead you yourself into a horrible crime.”

“No—not worse,” said Adam, bitterly; “I don’t believe it’s worse—I’d sooner do it—I’d sooner do a wickedness as I could suffer for myself, than ha’ brought *her* to do wickedness and then stand by and see ’em punish her while they let me alone; and all for a bit o’ pleasure, as, if he’d had a man’s heart in him, he’d ha’ cut his hand off sooner than he’d ha’ taken it. What if he didn’t foresee what’s happened? He feresaw enough; he’d no right t’ expect anything but harm and shame to her. And then he wanted to smooth it off wi’ lies. No—there’s plenty o’ things folks are hanged for, not half so hateful as that; let a man do what he will, if he knows he’s to bear the punishment himself, he isn’t half so bad as a mean selfish coward as makes things easy t’ himself, and knows all the while the punishment ’ull fall on somebody else.”

“There again you partly deceive yourself, Adam. There is no sort of wrong deed of which a man can bear the punishment alone; you can’t isolate yourself, and say that the evil which is in you shall not spread. Men’s lives are as thoroughly blended with each other as the air they breathe; evil spreads as necessarily as disease. I know, I feel the terrible extent of suffering this sin of Arthur’s has caused to others; but so does every sin cause suffering to others besides those who commit it. An act of vengeance on your part against Arthur would simply be another evil added to those we are suffering under; you could not bear the punishment alone; you would entail the worst sorrows on every one who loves you. You would have committed an act of blind fury, that would leave all the present evils just as they were, and add worse evils to them. You may tell me that you meditate no fatal act of vengeance; but the feeling in your mind is what gives birth to such actions, and as long as you indulge it, as long as you do not see that to fix your mind on Arthur’s punishment is revenge, and not justice, you are in danger of being led on to the commission of some great wrong. Remember what you told me about your feelings after you had given that blow to Arthur in the Grove.”

Adam was silent; the last words had called up a vivid image of the past, and Mr. Irwine left him to his thoughts, while he spoke to Bartle Massey about old Mr. Donnithorne’s

funeral and other matters of an indifferent kind. But at length Adam turned round and said in a more subdued tone,

"I've not asked about 'em at th' Hall Farm, sir. Is Mr. Poyser coming?"

"He is come; he is in Stoniton to-night. But I could not advise him to see you, Adam. His own mind is in a very perturbed state, and it is best he should not see you till you are calmer."

"Is Dinah Morris come to 'em, sir? Seth said they'd sent for her."

"No. Mr. Poyser tells me she was not come when he left. They are afraid the letter has not reached her. It seems they had no exact address."

Adam sat ruminating a little while, and then said,

"I wonder if Dinah 'ud ha' gone to see her. But perhaps the Poyzers would ha' been sorely against it, since they won't come nigh her themselves. But I think she would, for the Methodists are great folks for going into the prisons; and Seth said he thought she would. She'd a very tender way with her, Dinah had; I wonder if she could ha' done any good. You never saw her, sir, did you?"

"Yes, I did; I had a conversation with her—she pleased me a good deal. And now you mention it, I wish she would come; for it is possible that a gentle, mild woman like her might move Hetty to open her heart. The jail chaplain is rather harsh in his manner."

"But it's o' no use if she doesn't come," said Adam, sadly.

"If I'd thought of it earlier, I would have taken some measure for finding her out," said Mr. Irwine, "but it's too late now, I fear . . . Well, Adam, I must go now. Try to get some rest to-night. God bless you. I'll see you early to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER XLII.

THE MORNING OF THE TRIAL.

At one o'clock the next day, Adam was alone in his dull upper room; his watch lay before him on the table, as if he were counting the long minutes. He had no knowledge of

what was likely to be said by the witnesses on the trial, for he had shrunk from all the particulars connected with Hetty's arrest and accusation. This brave active man, who would have hastened toward any danger or toil to rescue Hetty from an apprehended wrong or misfortune, felt himself powerless to contemplate irremediable evil and suffering. The susceptibility which would have been an impelling force where there was any possibility of action, became helpless anguish when he was obliged to be passive ; or else sought an active outlet in the thought of inflicting justice on Arthur. Energetic natures, strong for all strenuous deeds, will often rush away from a hopeless sufferer, as if they were hard-hearted. It is the over-mastering sense of pain that drives them. They shrink by an ungovernable instinct, as they would shrink from laceration. Adam had brought himself to think of seeing Hetty, if she would consent to see him, because he thought the meeting might possibly be a good to her—might help to melt away this terrible hardness they told him of. If she saw he bore her no ill-will for what she had done to him, she might open her heart to him. But this resolution had been an immense effort ; he trembled at the thought of seeing her changed face, as a timid woman trembles at the thought of the surgeon's knife ; and he chose now to bear the long hours of suspense, rather than encounter what seemed to him the more intolerable agony of witnessing her trial.

Deep, unspeakable suffering may well be called a baptism, a regeneration, the initiation into a new state. The yearning memories, the bitter regret, the agonized sympathy, the struggling appeals to the Invisible Right—all the intense emotions which had filled the days and nights of the past week, and were compressing themselves again like an eager crowd into the hours of this single morning, made Adam look back on all the previous years as if they had been a dim, sleepy, existence, and he had only now awaked to full consciousness. It seemed to him as if he had always before thought it a light thing that men should suffer ; as if all that he had himself endured, and called sorrow before, was only a moment's stroke that had never left a bruise. Doubtless a great anguish may do the work of years, and we may come out from that baptism of fire with a soul full of new awe and pity.

"O God !" Adam groaned, as he leaned on the table, and looked blankly at the face of the watch, "and men have suffered like this before . . . and poor helpless young things have suffered like her . . . Such a little while ago, looking so happy

and so pretty . . . kissing 'em all, her grandfather and all of 'em, and they wishing her luck. . . . Oh, my poor, poor Hetty . . . dost think on it now?"

Adam started and looked round toward the door. Vixen had begun to whimper, and there was the sound of a stick and a lame walk on the stairs. It was Bartle Massey come back. Could it be all over?

Bartle entered quickly, and, going up to Adam, grasped his hand, and said, "I'm just come to look at you, my boy, for the folks are gone out of court for a bit."

Adam's heart beat so violently, he was unable to speak—he could only return the pressure of his friend's hand; and Bartle, drawing up the other chair, came and sat in front of him, taking off his hat and his spectacles.

"That's a thing never happened to me before," he observed—"to go out o' doors with my spectacles on. I clean forgot to take 'em off."

The old man made this trivial remark, thinking it better not to respond at all to Adam's agitation; he would gather, in an indirect way, that there was nothing decisive to communicate at present.

"And now," he said, rising again, "I must see to your having a bit of the loaf, and some of that wine Mr. Irwine sent this morning. He'll be angry with me if you don't have it. Come now," he went on, bringing forward the bottle and the loaf, and pouring some wine into a cup, "I must have a bit and a sup myself. Drink a drop with me, my lad—drink with me."

Adam pushed the cup gently away, and said, entreatingly, "Tell me about it, Mr. Massey—tell me all about it. Was she there? Have they begun?"

"Yes, my boy, yes—it's taken all the time since I first went; but they're slow, they're slow; and there's the counsel they've got for her puts a spoke in the wheel whenever he can, and makes a deal to do with cross-examining the witnesses, and quarrelling with the other lawyers. That's all he can do for the money they give him; and it's a big sum—it's a big sum. But he's a cute fellow, with an eye that 'ud pick the needles out of the hay in no time. If a man had got no feelings, it 'ud be as good as a demonstration to listen to what goes on in court; but a tender heart makes one stupid. I'd have given up figures forever only to have had some good news to bring to you, my poor lad."

"But does it seem to be going against her?" said Adam,

"Tell me what they've said. I must know it now—must know what they have to bring against her."

"Why, the chief evidence yet has been the doctors ; all but Martin Poyser—poor Martin ! Everybody in court felt for him—it was like one sob, the sound they made when he came down again. The worse was, when they told him to look at the prisoner at the bar. It was hard work, poor fellow—it was hard work. Adam, my boy, the blow falls heavily on him as well as you ; you must help poor Martin ; you must show courage. Drink some wine now, and show me you mean to bear it like a man."

Bartle had made the right sort of appeal. Adam, with an air of quiet obedience, took up the cup and drank a little.

"Tell me how *she* looked ?" he said presently.

"Frightened, very frightened, when they first brought her in ; it was the first sight of the crowd and the judge, poor creature. And there's a lot o' foolish women in fine clothes, with gewgaws all up their arms, and feathers on their heads, sitting near the judge : they've dressed themselves out in that way, one 'ud think, to be scarecrows and warnings against any man ever meddling with a woman again ; they put up their glasses, and stared and whispered. But after that she stood like a white image, staring down at her hands, and seeming neither to hear nor see anything. And she's as white as a sheet. She didn't speak when they asked her if she'd plead 'guilty' or 'not guilty,' and they pled 'not guilty' for her. But when she heard her uncle's name, there seemed to go a shiver right through her ; and when they told him to look at her, she hung her head down and cowered, and hid her face in her hands. He'd much ado to speak, poor man, his voice trembled so. And the counsellors—who look as hard as nails mostly—I saw, spared him as much as they could. Mr. Irwine put himself near him, and went with him out o' court. Ah ! it's a great thing in a man's life to be able to stand by a neighbor, and uphold him in such trouble as that."

"God bless him and you too, Mr. Massey," said Adam, in a low voice, laying his hand on Bartle's arm.

"Ay, ay, he's good metal ; he gives the right ring when you try him, our parson does. A man o' sense—says no more than's needful. He's not one of those that think they can comfort you with chattering, as if folks who stand by and look on knew a deal better what the trouble was than those who have to bear it. I've had to do with such folks in my time—in the South, when I was in trouble myself. Mr. Irwine is to

be a witness himself, by and by, on her side, you know, to speak to her character and bringing up."

"But the other evidence . . . does it go heard against her?" said Adam. "What do you think, Mr. Massey? Tell me the truth."

"Yes, my lad, yes : the truth is the best thing to tell. It must come at last. The doctors' evidence is heavy on her—is heavy. But she's gone on denying she's had a child from first to last : these poor silly woman-things—they've not the sense to know it's no use denying what's proved. It'll make against her with the jury, I doubt, her being so obstinate : they may be less for recommending her to mercy, if the verdict's against her. But Mr. Irwine 'll leave no stone unturned with the judge—you may rely upon that, Adam."

"Is there nobody to stand by her, and seem to care for her, in the court?" said Adam.

"There's the chaplain o' the jail sits near her, but he's a sharp ferrety-faced man—another sort o' flesh and blood to Mr. Irwine. They say the jail chaplains are mostly the fag-end o' the clergy."

"There's one man as ought to be there," said Adam bitterly. Presently he drew himself up, and looked fixedly out of the window, apparently turning over some new idea in his mind.

"Mr. Massey," he said at last, pushing the hair off his forehead, "I'll go gack with you. I'll go into court. It's cowardly of me to keep away. I'll stand by her—I'll own her—for all she's been deceitful. They oughtn't to cast her off—her own flesh and blood. We hand folks over to God's mercy, and show none ourselves. I used to be hard sometimes : I'll never be hard again. I'll go, Mr. Massey—I'll go with you."

There was a decision in Adam's manner which would have prevented Bartle from opposing him, even if he had wished to do so. He only said,

"Take a bit, then, and another sup, Adam, for the love of me. See, I must stop and eat a morsel. Now you take some."

Nerved by an active resolution, Adam took a morsel of bread, and drank some wine. He was haggard and unshaven, as he had been yesterday, but he stood upright again, and looked more like the Adam Bede of former days.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE VERDICT.

THE place fitted up that day as a court of justice was a grand old hall, now destroyed by fire. The midday light that fell on the close pavement of human heads, was shed through a line of high pointed windows, variegated with the mellow tints of old painted glass. Grim dusty armor hung in high relief in front of the dark oaken gallery at the farther end ; and under the broad arch of the great mullioned window opposite was spread a curtain of old tapestry, covered with dim melancholy figures, like a dozing indistinct dream of the past. It was a place that through the rest of the year was haunted with the shadowy memories of old kings and queens, unhappy, discrowned, imprisoned ; but to-day all those shadows had fled, and not a soul in the vast hall felt the presence of any but a living sorrow, which was quivering in warm hearts.

But that sorrow seemed to have made itself feebly felt hitherto, now when Adam Bede's tall figure was suddenly seen, being ushered to the side of the prisoner's dock. In the broad sunlight of the great hall, among the sleek shaven faces of other men, the marks of suffering in his face were startling even to Mr. Irwine, who had last seen him in the dim light of his small room ; and the neighbors from Hayslope who were present, and who told Hetty Sorrel's story by their firesides in their old age, never forgot to say how it moved them when Adam Bede, poor fellow, taller by the head than most of the people round him, came into court, and took his place by her side.

But Hetty did not see him. She was standing in the same position Bartle Massey had described, her hands crossed over each other, and her eyes fixed on them. Adam had not dared to look at her in the first moments, but at last, when the attention of the court was withdrawn by the proceedings, he turned his face toward her with a resolution not to shrink.

Why did they say she was so changed ? In the corpse we love, it is the *likeness* we see—it is the likeness, which makes itself felt the more keenly because something else *was*, and *is not*. There they were—the sweet face and neck, with the dark

tendrils of hair, the long dark lashes, the rounded cheek and the pouting lips ; pale and thin—yes—but like Hetty, and only Hetty. Others thought she looked as if some demon had cast a blighting glance upon her, withered up the woman's soul in her, and left only a hard despairing obstinacy. But the mother's yearning, that completest type of the life in another life which is the essence of real human love, feels the presence of the cherished child even in the debased, degraded man ; and to Adam, this pale, hard-looking culprit was the Hetty who had smiled at him in the garden under the apple-tree boughs—she was that Hetty's corpse, which he had trembled to look at the first time, and then was unwilling to turn away his eyes from.

But presently he heard something that compelled him to listen, and made the sense of sight less absorbing. A woman was in the witness-box, a middle-aged woman, who spoke in a firm distinct voice. She said,

"My name is Sarah Stone. I am a widow, and keep a small shop licensed to sell tobacco, snuff, and tea, in Church Lane, Stoniton. The prisoner at the bar is the same young woman who came, looking ill and tired, with a basket on her arm, and asked for a lodging at my house on Saturday evening, the 27th of February. She had taken the house for a public, because there was a figure against the door. And when I said I didn't take in lodgers, the prisoner began to cry, and said she was too tired to go anywhere else, and she only wanted a bed for one night. And her prettiness, and her condition, and something respectable about her clothes and looks, and the trouble she seemed to be in, made me as I couldn't find in my heart to send her away at once. I asked her to sit down, and gave her some tea, and asked her where she was going, and where her friends were. She said she was going home to her friends ; they were farming folks a good way off, and she'd had a long journey that had cost her more money than she expected, so as she'd hardly any money left in her pocket, and was afraid of going where it would cost her much. She had been obliged to sell most of the things out of her basket, but she'd thankfully give a shilling for a bed. I saw no reason why I shouldn't take the young woman in for the night. I had only one room, but there were two beds in it, and I told her she might stay with me. I thought she'd been led wrong and got into trouble, but if she was going to her friends, it would be a good work to keep her out of farther harm."

The witness then stated that in the night a child was born, and she identified the baby-clothes then shown to her as those in which she had herself dressed the child.

"These are the clothes. I made them myself, and have kept them by me ever since my last child was born. I took a deal of trouble both for the child and the mother. I couldn't help taking to the little thing and being anxious about it. I didn't send for a doctor, for there seemed no need. I told the mother in the daytime she must tell me the name of her friends, and where they lived, and let me write to them. She said, by and by she would write herself, but not to-day. She would have no nay, but she would get up and be dressed, in spite of everything I could say. She said she felt quite strong enough, and it was wonderful what spirit she showed. But I wasn't quite easy what I should do about her, and towards evening I made up my mind I'd go, after meeting was over, and speak to our minister about it. I left the house about half-past eight o'clock. I didn't go out at the shop door, but at the back door, which opens into a narrow alley. I've only got the ground floor of the house, and the kitchen and the bedroom both look into the alley. I left the prisoner sitting up by the fire in the kitchen with the baby on her lap. She hadn't cried or seemed low at all, as she did the night before. I thought she had a strange look with her eyes, and she got a bit flushed toward evening. I was afraid of the fever, and I thought I'd call and ask an acquaintance of mine, an experienced woman, to come back with me when I went out. It was a very dark night. I didn't fasten the door behind me; there was no lock; it was a latch with a bolt inside, and when there was nobody in the house I always went out at the shop door. But I thought there was no danger in leaving it unfastened that little while. I was longer than I meant to be, for I had to wait for the woman that came back with me. It was an hour and a half before we got back, and when we went in, the candle was burning just as I left it, but the prisoner and the baby were both gone. She'd taken her cloak and bonnet, but she'd left the basket and the things in it. . . . I was dreadful frightened, and angry with her for going. I didn't go to give information, because I'd no thought she meant to do any harm, and I knew she had money in her pocket to buy food and lodging. I didn't like to set the constable after her, for she'd a right to go from me if she liked."

The effect of this evidence on Adam was electrical; it gave him new force. Hetty could not be guilty of the crime

—her heart must have clung to her baby—else why should she have taken it with her? She might have left it behind. The little creature had died naturally, and then she had hidden it; babies were so liable to death—and there might be the strongest suspicions without any proof of guilt. His mind was so occupied with imaginary arguments against such suspicions, that he could not listen to the cross-examination by Hetty's counsel, who tried without result, to elicit evidence that the prisoner had shown some movements of maternal affection toward the child. The whole time this witness was being examined, Hetty had stood as motionless as before; no word seemed to arrest her ear. But the sound of the next witness's voice touched a chord that was still sensitive; she gave a start and a frightened look towards him, but immediately turned away her head and looked down at her hands as before. This witness was a man, a rough peasant. He said:

“My name is John Olding. I am a laborer, and live at Tedd's Hole, two miles out of Stoniton. A week last Monday, toward one o'clock in the afternoon, I was going toward Hetton Coppice, and about a quarter of a mile from the coppice I saw the prisoner, in a red cloak, sitting under a bit of a haystack not far off the stile. She got up when she saw me, and seemed as if she'd be walking on the other way. It was a regular road through the fields, and nothing very uncommon to see a young woman there, but I took notice of her because she looked white and scared. I should have thought she was a beggar woman only for her good clothes. I thought she looked a bit crazy, but it was no business of mine. I stood and looked back after her, but she went right on while she was in sight. I had to go to the other side of the coppice to look after some stakes. There's a road right through it, and bits of openings here and there, where the trees have been cut down, and some of 'em not carried away. I didn't go straight along the road, but turned off toward the middle, and took a shorter way toward the spot I wanted to get to. I hadn't got far out of the road into one of the open places, before I heard a strange cry. I thought it didn't come from any animal I knew, but I wasn't for stopping to look about just then. But it went on, and seemed so strange to me in that place, I couldn't help stopping to look. I began to think I might make some money of it, if it was a new thing. But I'd hark work to tell which way it came from, and for a good while I kept looking up at the boughs. And then I thought it came from the ground; and there was a lot of timber-chop-

pings lying about, and loose pieces of turf, and a trunk or two. And I looked about among them, but at last the cry stopped. So I was for giving it up, and went on about my business. But when I came back the same way pretty nigh an hour after, I couldn't help laying down my stakes to have another look. And just as I was stooping and laying down the stakes, I saw something odd and round and whitish lying on the ground under a nut-bush by the side of me. And I stooped down on hands and knees to pick it up. And I saw it was a little baby's hand."

At these words a thrill ran through the court. Hetty was visibly trembling; now, for the first time, she seemed to be listening to what a witness said.

"There was a lot of timber-choppings put together just where the ground went hollow, like, under the bush, and the hand came out from among them. But there was a hole left in one place, and I could see down it, and see the child's head; and I made haste and did away the turf and the chop-pings, and took out the child. It had got comfortable clothes on, but its body was cold, and I thought it must be dead. I made haste back with it out of the wood, and took it home to my wife. She said it was dead, and I'd better take it to the parish and tell the constable. And I said, 'I'll lay my life it's that young woman's child as I met going to the cop-pice.' But she seemed to be gone clean out of sight. And I took the child on to Hetton parish and told the constable, and we went on to Justice Hardy. And then we went looking after the young woman till dark at night, and we went and gave information at Stoniton as they might stop her. And the next morning, another constable came to me, to go with him to the spot where I found the child. And when we got there, there was the prisoner a-sitting against the bush where I found the child; and she cried out when she saw us, but she never offered to move. She'd got a big piece of bread on her lap."

Adam had given a faint groan of despair while this witness was speaking. He had hidden his face on his arm, which rested on the boarding in front of him. It was the supreme moment of his suffering; Hetty was guilty; and he was silently calling to God for help. He heard no more of the evidence, and was unconscious when the case for the prosecution had closed—unconscious that Mr. Irwine was in the witness-box, telling of Hetty's unblemished character in her own parish, and of the virtuous habits in which she had been

brought up. This testimony could have no influence on the verdict, but it was given as part of that plea for mercy which her own counsel would have made if he had been allowed to speak for her—a favor not granted to criminals in those stern times.

At last Adam lifted up his head, for there was a general movement round him. The judge had addressed the jury, and they were retiring. The decisive moment was not far off. Adam felt a shuddering horror that would not let him look at Hetty, but she had long relapsed into her blank hard indifference. All eyes were strained to look at her, but she stood like a statue of dull despair.

There was a mingled rustling, whispering, and low buzzing throughout the court during this interval. The desire to listen was suspended, and every one had some feeling or opinion to express in undertones. Adam sat looking blankly before him, but he did not see the objects that were right in front of his eyes—the counsels and attorneys talking with an air of cool baseness, and Mr. Irwine in low, earnest conversation with the judge; did not see Mr. Irwine sit down again in agitation, and shake his head mournfully when somebody whispered to him. The inward action was too intense for Adam to take in outward objects, until some strong sensation roused him.

It was not very long, hardly more than a quarter of an hour, before the knock which told that the jury had come to their decision fell as a signal for silence on every ear. It is sublime—that sudden pause of a great multitude, which tells that one soul moves in them all. Deeper and deeper the silence seemed to become, like the deepening night, while the jurymen's names were called over, and the prisoner was made to hold up her hand, and the jury was asked for their verdict. "Guilty."

It was the verdict every one expected, but there was a sigh of disappointment from some hearts, that it was followed by no recommendation to mercy. Still the sympathy of the court was not with the prisoner; the unnaturalness of her crime stood out the more harshly by the side of her hard immovability and obstinate silence. Even the verdict, to distant eyes, had not appeared to move her; but those who were near saw her trembling.

The stillness was less intense until the judge put on his black cap, and the chaplain in his canonicals was observed behind him. Then it deepened again, before the crier had had

time to command silence. If any sound were heard, it must have been the sound of beating hearts. The Judge spoke :

"Hester Sorrel."

The blood rushed to Hetty's face, and then fled back again, as she looked up at the judge, and kept her wide-open eyes fixed on him, as if fascinated by fear. Adam had not yet turned toward her ; there was a deep horror, like a great gulf, between them. But at the words—"and then to be hanged by the neck till you be dead," a piercing shriek rang through the hall. It was Hetty's shriek. Adam started to his feet and stretched out his arms toward her ; but the arms could not reach her ; she had fallen down in a fainting fit, and was carried out of court.

CHAPTER XLIV.

ARTHUR'S RETURN.

WHEN Arthur Donnithorne landed at Liverpool, and read the letter from his aunt Lydia, briefly announcing his grandfather's death, his first feeling was, "Poor grandfather ! I wish I could have got to him to be with him when he died. He might have felt or wished something at the last that I shall never know now. It was a lonely death."

It is impossible to say that his grief was deeper than that. Pity and softened memory took place of the old antagonism, and in his busy thoughts about the future, as the chaise carried him rapidly along toward the home where he was now to be master, there was a continually recurring effort to remember anything by which he could show a regard for his grandfather's wishes, without counteracting his own cherished aims for the good of the tenants and the estate. But it is not in human nature—only in human pretence—for a young man like Arthur, with a fine constitution and fine spirits, thinking well of himself, believing that others think well of him, and having a very ardent intention to give them more and more reason for that good opinion—it is not possible for such a young man, just coming into a splendid estate through the death of a very old man whom he was not fond of, to feel anything very different from exultant joy. *Now* his real life was beginning; now he

would have room and opportunity for acting, and he would use them. He would show the Loamshire people what a fine country gentleman was ; he would not exchange that career for any other under the sun. He felt himself riding over the hills in the breezy autumn days, looking after favorite plans of drainage and inclosure ; then admired on sombre mornings as the best rider on the best horse in the hunt ; spoken well of on market-days as a first-rate landlord ; by and by making speeches at election dinners, and showing a wonderful knowledge of agriculture ; the patron of new ploughs and drills, the severe upbraider of negligent landowners, and withal a jolly fellow that everybody must like—happy faces greeting him everywhere on his own estate, and the neighboring families on the best terms with him. The Irwines should dine with him every week, and have their own carriage to come in, for in some very delicate way that Arthur would devise, the lay-impropriator of the Hayslope tithes would insist on paying a couple of hundreds more to the vicar ; and his aunt should be as comfortable as possible, and go on living at the Chase, if she liked, in spite of her old-maidish ways—at least until he was married ; and that even lay in the indistinct background, for Arthur had not yet seen the woman who would play the lady-wife to the first-rate country gentleman.

These were Arthur's chief thoughts, so far as a man's thoughts through hours of travelling can be compressed into a few sentences, which are only like the list of names telling you what are the scenes in a long, long panorama, full of color, of detail, and of life. The happy faces Arthur saw greeting him were not pale abstractions, but real ruddy faces, long familiar to him ; Martin Poyser was there—the whole Poyser family.

What—Hetty ?

Yes ; for Arthur was at ease about Hetty : not quite at ease about the past, for a certain burning of the ears would come whenever he thought of the scenes with Adam last August—but at ease about her present lot. Mr. Irwine, who had been a regular correspondent, telling him all the news about the old places and people, had sent him word nearly three months ago that Adam Bede was not to marry Mary Burge, as he had thought, but pretty Hetty Sorrel. Martin Poyser and Adam himself had both told Mr. Irwine all about it—that Adam had been deeply in love with Hetty these two years, and that now it was agreed they were to be married in March. The stalwart rogue Adam was more susceptible than

the rector had thought ; it was really quite an idyllic love-affair ; and if it had not been too long to tell in a letter, he would have liked to describe to Arthur the blushing looks and the simple, strong words with which the fine, honest fellow told his secret. He knew Arthur would like to hear that Adam had this sort of happiness in prospect.

Yes, indeed ! Arthur felt there was not air enough in the room to satisfy his renovated life, when he had read that passage in the letter. He threw up the windows, he rushed out of doors into the December air, and greeted every one who spoke to him with an eager gayety, as if there had been news of a fresh Nelson victory. For the first time that day since he had come to Windsor, he was in true boyish spirits ; the load that had been pressing upon him was gone ; the haunting fear had vanished. He thought he could conquer his bitterness toward Adam now—could offer him his hand, and ask to be his friend again, in spite of that painful memory which would still make his ears burn. He had been knocked down, and he had been forced to tell a lie ; such things make a scar, do what we will. But if Adam were the same again as in the old days, Arthur wished to be the same too, and to have Adam mixed up with his business and his future, as he had always desired before that accursed meeting in August. Nay, he would do a great deal more for Adam than he should otherwise have done, when he came into the estate ; Hetty's husband had a special claim on him—Hetty herself should feel that any pain she had suffered through Arthur in the past was compensated to her a hundred-fold. For really she could not have felt much, since she had so soon made up her mind to marry Adam.

You perceive clearly what sort of picture Adam and Hetty made in the panorama of Arthur's thoughts on his journey homeward. It was March now ; they were soon to be married ; perhaps they were already married. And *now* it was actually in his power to do a great deal for them. Sweet—sweet little Hetty ! The little puss hadn't cared for him half as much as he cared for her ; for he was a great fool about her still—was almost afraid of seeing her—indeed, had not cared much to look at any other woman since he parted from her. That little figure coming toward him in the Grove, those dark-fringed, childish eyes, the lovely lips put up to kiss him—that picture had got no fainter with the lapse of months. And she would look just the same. It was impossible to think how he could meet her ; he should certainly tremble. Strange, how long this sort of influence lasts ; for he was cer-

tainly not in love with Hetty now ; he had been earnestly desiring for months, that she should marry Adam, and there was nothing that contributed more to his happiness in these moments than the thought of their marriage. It was the exaggerating effect of imagination that made his heart still beat a little more quickly at the thought of her. When he saw the little thing again as she really was, as Adam's wife, at work quite prosaically in her new home, he should, perhaps, wonder at the possibility of his past feelings. Thank heaven it had turned out so well ! He should have plenty of affairs and interests to fill his life now, and not be in danger of playing the fool again.

Pleasant the crack of the postboy's whip ! Pleasant the sense of being hurried along in swift ease through English scenes, so like those round his own home, only not quite so charming. Here was a market-town—very much like Tredleston—where the arms of the neighboring lord of the manor were borne on the sign of the principal inn ; then mere fields and hedges, their vicinity to a market-town carrying an agreeable suggestion of high rent, till the land began to assume a trimmer look, the woods were more frequent, and at length a white or red mansion looked down from a moderate eminence, or allowed him to be aware of its parapet and chimneys among the dense-looking masses of oaks and elms—masses reddened now with early buds. And close at hand came the village ; the small church with its red-tiled roof, looking humble even among the faded half-timbered houses ; the old green grave-stones with nettles round them ; nothing fresh and bright but the children, opening round eyes at the swift post-chaise ; nothing noisy and busy but the gaping curs of mysterious pedigree. What a much prettier village Hayslope was ! And it should not be neglected like this place ; vigorous repairs should go on everywhere among farm-buildings and cottages, travellers in post-chaises, coming along the Rosseter road should do nothing but admire as they went. And Adam Bede should superintend all the repairs, for he had a share in Burge's business now, and, if he liked, Arthur would put some money into the concern, and buy the old man out in another year or two. That was an ugly fault in Arthur's life, that affair last summer ; but the future should make amends. Many men would have retained a feeling of vindictiveness toward Adam ; but *he* would not—he would resolutely overcome all littleness of that kind, for he had certainly been very much in the wrong ; and though Adam had been harsh and violent, and

had thrust on him a painful dilemma, the poor fellow was in love, and had real provocation. No ; Arthur had not an evil feeling in his mind toward any human being ; he was happy, and would made every one else happy that came within his reach.

And here was dear old Hayslope at last, sleeping on the hill, like a quiet old place as it was, in the late afternoon sunlight ; and opposite to it the great shoulders of the Binton Hills, below them the purplish blackness of the hanging woods, and, at last, the pale front of the Abbey, looking out from among the oaks of the Chase, as if anxious for the heir's return. " Poor grandfather ! and he lies dead there. *He* was a young fellow once, coming into the estate, and making his plans. So the world goes round ? Aunt Lydia must feel very desolate, poor thing ; but she shall be indulged as much as she indulges her fat Fido."

The wheels of Arthur's chaise had been anxiously listened for at the Chase, for to-day was Friday, and the funeral had already been deferred two days. Before it drew up on the gravel of the court-yard, all the servants in the house were assembled to receive him with a grave, decent welcome, befitting a house of death. A month ago, perhaps, it would have been difficult for them to have maintained a suitable sadness in their faces when Mr. Arthur was come to take possession ; but the hearts of the head-servants were heavy that day for another cause than the death of the old squire, and more than one of them was longing to be twenty miles away, as Mr. Craig was, knowing what was to become of Hetty Sorrel—pretty Hetty Sorrel—whom they used to see every week. They had the partisanship of household servants who like their places, and were not inclined to go to the full length of the severe indignation felt against him by the farming tenants, but rather to make excuses for him ; nevertheless, the upper servants, who had been on terms of neighborly intercourse with the Poysers for many years, could not help feeling that the longed-for event of the young squire's coming into the estate had been robbed of all its pleasantness.

To Arthur it was nothing surprising that the servants looked grave and sad ; he himself was very much touched on seeing them all again, and feeling that he was in a new relation to them. It was that sort of pathetic emotion which has more pleasure than pain in it, which is, perhaps, one of the most delicious of all states to a good-natured man, conscious of the power to satisfy his good-nature. His heart swelled agreeably as he said,

"Well, Mills, how is my aunt?"

But now Mr. Bygate, the lawyer, who had been in the house ever since the death, came forward to give deferential greetings and answer all questions, and Arthur walked with him toward the library, where his aunt Lydia was expecting him. Aunt Lydia was the only person in the house who knew nothing about Hetty; her sorrow as a maiden daughter was un-mixed with any other thoughts than those of anxiety about funeral arrangements and her own future lot; and after the manner of women, she mourned for the father who had made her life important, all the more because she had a secret sense that there was little mourning for him in other hearts.

But Arthur kissed her tearful face more tenderly than he had ever done in his life before.

"Dear aunt," he said, affectionately, as he held her hand, "*your* loss is the greatest of all, but you must tell me how to try and make it up to you all the rest of your life."

"It was so sudden and so dreadful, Arthur," poor Miss Lydia began, pouring out her little complaints; and Arthur sat down to listen with impatient patience. When a pause came, he said,

"Now, aunt, I'll leave you for a quarter of an hour, just to go to my own room, and then I shall come and give full attention to everything."

"My room is all ready for me, I suppose, Mills," he said to the butler, who seemed to be lingering uneasily about the entrance-hall.

"Yes, sir, and there are letters for you; they are all laid on the writing-table in your dressing-room."

On entering the small ante-room, which was called a dressing-room, but which Arthur really used only to lounge and write in, he just cast his eyes on the writing-table, and saw that there were several letters and packets lying there; but he was in the uncomfortable dusty condition of a man who has had a long, hurried journey, and he must really refresh himself by attending to his toilet a little before he read his letters. Pym was there, making everything ready for him; and soon, with a delightful freshness about him, as if he were prepared to begin a new day, he went back into his dressing-room to open his letters. The level rays of the low afternoon sun entered directly at the window, and, as Arthur seated himself in his velvet chair, with their pleasant warmth upon him, he was conscious of that quiet well-being which, perhaps, you and I have felt on a sunny afternoon, when, in our brightest youth and health,

life has opened on a new vista for us, and long to-morrows of activity have stretched before us like a lovely plain, which there was no need for hurrying to look at, because it was all our own.

The top letter was placed with its address upward ; it was in Mr. Irwine's handwriting, Arthur saw at once ; and below the address was written, "To be delivered as soon as he arrives." Nothing could have been less surprising to him than a letter from Mr. Irwine at that moment ; of course there was something he wished Arthur to know earlier than it was possible for them to see each other. At such a time as that it was quite natural that Irwine should have something pressing to say. Arthur broke the seal with an agreeable anticipation of soon seeing the writer.

"I send this letter to meet you on your arrival, Arthur, because I may then be at Stoniton, whither I am called by the most painful duty it has ever been given me to perform ; and it is right that you should know what I have to tell you without delay.

"I will not attempt to add by one word of reproach to the retribution that is now falling on you ; any other words that I could write at this moment must be weak and unmeaning by the side of those in which I must tell you the simple fact.

"Hetty Sorrel is in prison, and will be tried on Friday for the crime of child-murder." . . .

Arthur read no more. He started up from his chair, and stood for a single minute with a sense of violent convulsion in his whole frame, as if the life were going out of him with horrible throbs ; but the next minute he had rushed out of the room, still clutching the letter—he was hurrying along the corridor, and down the stairs into the hall. Mills was still there, but Arthur did not see him, as he passed like a hunted man across the hall and out along the gravel. The butler hurried out after him as fast as his elderly limbs could run ; he guessed, he knew, where the young squire was going.

When Mills got to the stables, a horse was being saddled, and Arthur was forcing himself to read the remaining words of the letter. He thrust it into his pocket as the horse was led up to him, and at that moment caught sight of Mills's anxious face in front of him.

"Tell them I'm gone—gone to Stoniton," he said, in a muffled tone of agitation—sprang into the saddle, and set off at a gallop.

CHAPTER XLV.

IN THE PRISON.

NEAR sunset that evening an elderly gentleman was standing with his back against the smaller entrance-door of Stoniton jail, saying a few last words to the departing chaplain. The chaplain walked away, but the elderly gentleman stood still, looking down on the pavement and stroking his chin, with a ruminating air, when he was roused by a sweet clear woman's voice, saying,

"Can I get into the prison, if you please?"

He turned his head, and looked fixedly at the speaker for a few moments without answering.

"I have seen you before," he said, at last. "Do you remember preaching on the village green at Hayslope in Loamshire?"

"Yes, sir, surely. Are you the gentleman that staid to listen on horseback?"

"Yes. Why do you want to go into the prison?"

"I want to go to Hetty Sorrel, the young woman who has been condemned to death—and to stay with her, if I may be permitted. Have you power in the prison, sir?"

"Yes; I am a magistrate, and can get admittance for you. But did you know this criminal, Hetty Sorrel?"

"Yes, we are kin; my own aunt married her uncle, Martin Poyser. But I was away at Leeds, and didn't know of this great trouble in time to get here before to-day. I entreat you, sir, for the love of our heavenly Father, to let me go to her and stay with her."

"How did you know she was condemned to death, if you are only just come from Leeds?"

"I have seen my uncle since the trial, sir. He is gone back to his home now, and the poor sinner is forsaken of all. I beseech you to get leave for me to be with her."

"What! have you courage to stay all night in the prison? She is very sullen, and will scarcely make answer when she is spoken to."

"Oh, sir, it may please God to open her heart, still. Don't let us delay."

"Come, then," said the elderly gentleman, ringing, and gaining admission; "I know you have a key to unlock hearts."

Dinah mechanically took off her bonnet and shawl as soon as they were within the prison court, from the habit she had of throwing them off when she preached or prayed, or visited the sick ; and when they entered the jailer's room, she laid them down on a chair unthinkingly. There was no agitation visible in her, but a deep concentrated calmness, as if, even when she was speaking, her soul was in prayer, reposing on an unseen support.

After speaking to the jailer, the magistrate turned to her and said, "The turnkey will take you to the prisoner's cell, and leave you there for the night, if you desire it ; but you can't have a light during the night—it is contrary to rules. My name is Colonel Townley ; if I can help you in anything, ask the jailer for my address, and come to me. I take some interest in this Hetty Sorrel, for the sake of that fine fellow, Adam Bede ; I happened to see him at Hayslope the same evening I heard you preach, and recognized him in court to-day, ill as he looked."

"Ah! sir, can you tell me anything about him? Can you tell me where he lodges? For my poor uncle was too much weighed down with trouble to remember."

"Close by here. I inquired all about him of Mr. Irwine. He lodges over a tinman's shop, in the street on the right hand as you entered the prison. There is an old schoolmaster with him. Now good-by ; I wish you success."

"Farewell, sir. I am grateful to you."

As Dinah crossed the prison court with the turnkey, the solemn evening light seemed to make the walls higher than they were by day, and the sweet pale face in the cap was more than ever like a white flower on this background of gloom. The turnkey looked askance at her all the while, but never spoke ; he somehow felt that the sound of his own rude voice would be grating just then. He struck a light as they entered the dark corridor leading to the condemned cell, and then said in his most civil tone, "It'll be pretty nigh dark in the cell a'ready ; but I can stop with my light a bit, if you like."

"Nay, friend, thank you," said Dinah. "I wish to go in alone."

"As you like," said the jailer, turning the harsh key in the lock, and opening the door wide enough to admit Dinah. A jet of light from his lantern fell on the opposite corner of the cell, where Hetty was sitting on her straw pallet with her face buried in her knees. It seemed as if she were asleep, and yet the grating of the lock would have been likely to waken her.

The door closed again, and the only light in the cell was that of the evening sky, through the small high grating—enough to discern human faces by. Dinah stood still for a minute, hesitating to speak, because Hetty might be asleep ; and looking at the motionless heap with a yearning heart. Then she said, softly,

“ Hetty !

There was a slight movement perceptible in Hetty’s frame—a start such as might have been produced by a feeble electrical shock ; but she did not look up. Dinah spoke again, in a tone made stronger by irrepressible emotion :

“ Hetty . . . it’s Dinah.”

Again there was a slight startled movement through Hetty’s frame, and without uncovering her face, she raised her head a little, as if listening.

“ Hetty . . . Dinah is come to you.”

After a moment’s pause, Hetty lifted her head slowly and timidly from her knees, and raised her eyes. The two pale faces were looking at each other ; one with a wild, hard despair in it, the other full of sad, yearning love. Dinah unconsciously opened her arms and stretched them out.

“ Don’t you know me, Hetty ? Don’t you remember Dinah ? Did you think I wouldn’t come to you in trouble ? ”

Hetty kept her eyes fixed on Dinah’s face—at first like an animal that gazes, and gazes, and keeps aloof.

“ I’m come to be with you, Hetty—not to leave you—to stay with you—to be your sister to the last.”

Slowly, while Dinah was speaking, Hetty rose, took a step forward, and was clasped in Dinah’s arms.

They stood so a long while, for neither of them felt the impulse to move apart again. Hetty, without any distinct thought of it, hung on this something that was come to clasp her now, while she was sinking helpless in a dark gulf ; and Dinah felt a deep joy in the first sign that her love was welcomed by the wretched lost one. The light got fainter, as they stood, and when at last they sat down on the straw pallet together, their faces had become indistinct.

Not a word was spoken. Dinah waited, hoping for a spontaneous word from Hetty ; but she sat in the same dull despair, only clutching the hand that held hers, and leaning her cheek against Dinah’s. It was the human contact she clung to, but she was not the less sinking into the dark gulf.

Dinah began to doubt whether Hetty was conscious who it was that sat beside her. She thought suffering and fear might

have driven the poor sinner out of her mind. But it was borne in upon her, as she afterward said, that she must not hurry God's work ; we are over-hasty to speak—as if God did not manifest himself by our silent feeling, and make his love felt through ours. She did not know how long they sat in that way, but it got darker and darker, till there was only a pale patch of light on the opposite wall ; all the rest was darkness. But she felt the Divine Presence more and more—nay, as if she herself were a part of it, and it was the Divine pity that was beating in her heart, and was willing the rescue of this helpless one. At last she was prompted to speak, and find out how far Hetty was conscious of the present.

"Hetty," she said, gently, "do you know who it is that sits by your side?"

"Yes," Hetty answered slowly, "it's Dinah."

"And do you remember the time when we were at the Hall Farm together, and that night when I told you to be sure and think of me as a friend in trouble?"

"Yes," said Hetty. Then, after a pause, she added, "But you can do nothing for me. You can't make 'em do anything. They'll hang me o' Monday—it's Friday now."

As Hetty said the last word she clung closer to Dinah, shuddering.

"No, Hetty, I can't save you from that death. But isn't the suffering less hard when you have somebody with you, that feels for you—that you can speak to, and say what's in your heart? . . . Yes, Hetty ; you lean on me ; you are glad to have me with you."

"You won't leave me, Dinah? You'll keep close to me?"

"No, Hetty, I won't leave you. I'll stay with you to the last. . . . But, Hetty, there is some one else in this cell besides me, some one close to you."

Hetty said in a frightened whisper, "Who?"

"Some one who has been with you through all your hours of sin and trouble—who has known every thought you have had—has seen where you went, where you laid down and rose up again, and all the deeds you have tried to hide in darkness. And on Monday, when I can't follow you—when my arms can't reach you—when death has parted us—He who is with us now, and knows all, will be with you then. It makes no difference—whether we live or die, we are in the presence of God."

"Oh, Dinah, won't nobody do anything for me? *Will* they hang me for certain? . . . I wouldn't mind if they'd let me live."

"My poor Hetty, death is very dreadful to you. I know it's dreadful. But if you had a friend to take care of you after death—in that other world—some one whose love is greater than mine—who can do everything. . . . If God our Father was your friend, and was willing to save you from sin and suffering, so as you should neither know wicked feelings nor pain again? If you could believe he loved you and would help you, as you believe I love you and will help you, it wouldn't be so hard to die on Monday, would it?"

"But I can't know anything about it," Hetty said, with sullen sadness.

"Because, Hetty, you are shutting up your soul against him, by trying to hide the truth. God's love and mercy can overcome all things—ignorance, and weakness, and all the burden of our past wickedness—all things but our wilful sin; sin that we cling to, and will not give up. You believe in my love and pity for you, Hetty; but if you had not let me come near you, if you wouldn't have looked at me or spoken to me, you'd have shut me out from helping you; I couldn't have made you feel my love; I couldn't have told you what I felt for you. Don't shut God's love out in that way, by clinging to sin. . . . He can't bless you while you have one falsehood in your soul; his pardoning mercy can't reach you until you open your heart to him, and say, 'I have done this great wickedness; O God, save me, make me pure from sin.' While you cling to one sin and will not part with it, it must drag you down to misery after death, as it has dragged you to misery here in this world, my poor, poor Hetty. It is sin that brings dread, and darkness, and despair; there is light and blessedness for us as soon as we cast it off; God enters our souls then, and teaches us, and brings us strength and peace. Cast it off, now, Hetty—now; confess the wickedness you have done—the sin you have been guilty of against God your heavenly Father. Let us kneel down together, for we are in the presence of God."

Hetty obeyed Dinah's movement and sank on her knees. They still held each other's hands, and there was long silence. Then Dinah said,

"Hetty, we are before God: he is waiting for you to tell the truth."

Still there was silence. At last Hetty spoke in a tone of beseeching.

"Dinah . . . help me . . . I can't feel anything like you . . . my heart is hard."

Dinah held the clinging hand, and all her soul went forth in her voice :

"Jesus, thou present Saviour ! Thou hast known the depths of all sorrow : thou hast entered that black darkness where God is not, and hast uttered the cry of the forsaken. Come, Lord, and gather of the fruits of thy travail and thy pleading : stretch forth thy hand, thou who art mighty to save to the uttermost, and rescue this lost one. She is clothed round with thick darkness : the fetters of her sin are upon her, and she cannot stir to come to thee : she can only feel that her heart is hard, and she is helpless. She cries to me thy weak creature. . . . Saviour ! it is a blind cry to thee. Hear it ! Pierce the darkness ! Look upon her with thy face of love and sorrow, that thou didst turn on him who denied thee ; and melt her hard heart.

"See, Lord—I bring her, as they of old brought the sick and helpless, and thou didst heal them : I bear her on my arms and carry her before thee. Fear and trembling have taken hold on her ; but she trembles only at the pain and death of the body : breathe upon her thy life-giving Spirit, and put a new fear within—the fear of her sin. Make her dread to keep the accursed thing within her soul : make her feel the presence of the living God, who beholds all the past, to whom the darkness is as noon-day ; who is waiting now, at the eleventh hour, for her to turn to him, and confess her sin, and cry for mercy—now, before the night of death comes, and the moment of pardon is forever fled, like yesterday that returneth not.

"Saviour ! it is yet time—time to snatch this poor soul from everlasting darkness. I believe—I believe in thy infinite love. What is *my* love or *my* pleading ? It is quenched in thine. I can only clasp her in my weak arms, and urge her with my weak pity. Thou—thou wilt breathe on the dead soul, and it shall arise from the unanswering sleep of death.

"Yea, Lord, I see thee, coming through the darkness, coming, like the morning, with healing on thy wings. The marks of thy agony are upon thee—I see, I see thou art able and willing to save—thou wilt not let her perish forever.

"Come, mighty Saviour ! let the dead hear thy voice : let the eyes of the blind be opened ; let her see that God encompasses her ; let her tremble at nothing but at the sin that cuts her off from him. Melt the hard heart ; unseal the closed lips : make her cry with her whole soul, 'Father, I have sinned.'"

"Dinah," Hetty sobbed out, throwing her arms round

Dinah's neck, "I will speak . . . I will tell . . . I won't hide it any more."

But the tears and sobs were too violent. Dinah raised her gently from her knees, and seated her on the pallet again, sitting down by her side. It was a long time before the convulsed throat was quiet, and even then they sat some time in stillness and darkness, holding each other's hands. At last Hetty whispered,

"I did do it, Dinah . . . I buried it in the wood . . . the little baby . . . and it cried . . . I heard it cry . . . ever such a way off . . . all night . . . and I went back because it cried . . .

She paused, and then spoke hurriedly in a louder, pleading tone.

"But I thought perhaps it wouldn't die—there might somebody find it. I didn't kill it—I didn't kill it myself. I put it down there and covered up, and when I came back it was gone. . . . It was because I was so very miserable, Dinah . . . I didn't know where to go . . . and I tried to kill myself before, and I couldn't. Oh, I tried so to drown myself in the pool, and I couldn't. I went to Windsor—I ran away—did you know? I went to find him, as he might take care of me; and he was gone; and then I didn't know what to do. I daredn't go back home again—I couldn't bear it. I couldn't have bore to look at anybody, for they'd have scorned me. I thought o' you sometimes, and thought I'd come to you, for I didn't think you'd be cross with me, and cry shame on me: I thought I could tell you. But then, the other folks 'ud come to know it at last, and I couldn't bear that. It was partly thinking o' you made me come toward Stoniton; and, besides, I was so frightened at going wandering about till I was a beggar-woman, and had nothing; and sometimes it seemed as if I must go back to the Farm sooner than that. Oh! it was so dreadful, Dinah . . . I was so miserable . . . I wished I'd never been born into this world. I should never like to go into the fields again—I hated 'em so in my misery."

Hetty paused again, as if the sense of the past were too strong upon her for words.

"And then I got to Stoniton, and I began to feel frightened that night, because I was so near home. And then the little baby was born, when I didn't expect it; and the thought came into my mind that I might get rid of it, and go home again. The thought came all of a sudden, as I was lying in the bed,

and it got stronger and stronger I longed so to go back again I couldn' bear being so lonely, and coming to beg for want. And it gave me strength and resolution to get up and dress myself. I felt I must do it I didn't know how I thought I'd find a pool, if I could, like that other, in the corner of the field, in the dark. And when the woman went out, I felt as if I was strong enough to do anything I thought I should get rid of all my misery. and go back home, and never let 'em know why I ran away. I put on my bonnet and shawl, and went out into the dark street with the baby under my cloak ; and I walked fast til I got into a street a good way off, and there was a public and I got some warm stuff to drink and some bread. And I walked on, and on, and I hardly felt the ground I trod on ; and it got lighter, for there came the moon—oh, Dinah ! it frightened me when it first looked at me out o' the clouds—it never looked so before ; and I turned out of the road into the fields, for I was afraid o' meeting anybody with the moon shining on me. And I came to a hay-stack, where I thought I could lie down and keep myself warm all night. There was a place cut into it, where I could make me a bed ; and I lay comfortable, and the baby was warm against me ; and I must have gone to sleep for a good while, for when I woke it was morning, but not very light, and the baby was crying. And I saw a wood a little way off I thought there'd perhaps be a ditch or a pond there and it was so early I thought I could hide the child there, and get a long way off before folks was up. And then I thought I'd go home—I'd get rides in carts and go home, and tell 'em I'd been to try and see for a place, and couldn't get one. I longed so for it, Dinah—I longed so to be safe at home. I don't know how I felt about the baby. I seemed to hate it—it was like a heavy weight hanging round my neck ; and yet its crying went through me, and I daredn't look at its little hands and face. But I went on to the wood, and I walked about, but there was no water"

Hetty shuddered. She was silent for some moments, and when she began again, it was in a whisper.

"I came to a place where there was lots of chips and turf, and I sat down on the trunk of a tree to think what I should do. And all of a sudden I saw a hole under the nut-tree, like a little grave. And it darted into me like lightning—I'd lay the baby there, and cover it with the grass and the chips. I couldn't kill it any other way. And I'd done it in a minute ; and, oh, it cried so, Dinah—I *couldn't* cover it quite up—I

thought, perhaps, somebody 'ud come and take care of it, and then it wouldn't die. And I made haste out of the wood, but I could hear it crying all the while ; and when I got out into the fields, it was as if I was held fast—I couldn't go away, for all I wanted so to go. And I sat against the hay-stack to watch if anybody 'ud come ; I was very hungry, and I'd only a bit of bread left ; but I couldn't go away. And after ever such a while—hours and hours—the man came—him in a smock-frock, and he looked at me so, I was frightened, and I made haste and went on. I thought he was going to the wood, and would, perhaps, find the baby. And I went right on, till I came to a village, a long way off from the wood ; and I was very sick, and faint, and hungry. I got something to eat there, and bought a loaf. But I was frightened to stay. I heard the baby crying, and thought the other folks heard it too—and I went on. But I was so tired, and it was getting toward dark. And at last, by the roadside there was a barn—ever such a way off any house—like the barn in Abbot's Close ; and I thought I could go in there and hide myself among the hay and straw, and nobody 'ud be likely to come. I went in, and it was half full o' trusses of straw, and there was some hay too. And I made myself a bed, ever so far behind, where nobody could find me ; and I was so tired and weak, I went to sleep But oh ! the baby's crying kept waking me ; and I thought that man as looked at me so was come and laying hold of me. But I must have slept a long while at last, though I didn't know ; for when I got up and went out of the barn, I didn't know whether it was night or morning. But it was morning, for it kept getting lighter ; and I turned back the way I'd come. I couldn't help it, Dinah ; it was the baby's crying made me go ; and yet I was frightened to death. I thought that man in the smock-frock 'ud see me, and know I put the baby there. But I went on, for all that I'd left off thinking about going home—it had gone out o' my mind. I saw nothing but that place in the wood where I'd buried the baby I see it now. Oh, Dinah ! shall I allays see it ?”

Hetty clung round Dinah, and shuddered again. The silence seemed long before she went on.

“I met nobody, for it was very early, and I got into the wood. . . . I knew the way to the place . . . the place against the nut-tree ; and I could hear it crying at every step. . . . I thought it was alive. . . . I don't know whether I was frightened or glad. . . . I don't know what I felt. I only

know I was in the wood and heard the cry. I don't know what I felt till I saw the baby was gone. And when I'd put it there, I thought I should like somebody to find it, and save it from dying ; but when I saw it was gone, I was struck like a stone with fear. I never thought o' stirring, I felt so weak. I knew I couldn't run away, and everybody as saw me 'ud know about the baby. My heart went like a stone ; I couldn't wish or try for anything : it seemed like as if I should stay there forever, and nothing 'ud ever change. But they came and took me away."

Hetty was silent, but she shuddered again, as if there were still something behind ; and Dinah waited, for her heart was so full that tears must come before words. At last Hetty burst out, with a sob,

"Dinah, do you think God will take away that crying and the place in the wood, now I've told everything?"

"Let us pray, poor sinner ; let us fall on our knees again, and pray to the God of all mercy."

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE HOURS OF SUSPENSE.

ON Sunday morning, when the church bells in Stoniton were ringing for morning service, Bartle Massey re-entered Adam's room after a short absence, and said,

"Adam, here's a visitor wants to see you."

Adam was seated with his back toward the door, but he started up and turned round instantly, with a flushed face and an eager look. His face was even thinner and more worn than we have seen it before, but he was washed and shaven this Sunday morning.

"Is it any news?" he said.

"Keep yourself quiet, my lad," said Bartle ; "keep quiet. It's not what you're thinking of : it's the young Methodist woman come from the prison. She's at the bottom o' the stairs, and wants to know if you think well to see her, for she has something to say to you about that poor castaway ; but she wouldn't come in without your leave, she said. She

thought you'd perhaps like to go out and speak to her. Those preaching women are not so back'ard commonly," Bartle muttered to himself.

"Ask her to come in," said Adam.

He was standing with his face toward the door, and as Dinah entered, lifting up her mild gray eyes toward him, she saw at once the great change that had come since the day when she had looked up at the tall man in the cottage. There was a trembling in her clear voice as she put her hand into his, and said,

"Be comforted, Adam Bede; the Lord has not forsaken her."

"Bless you for coming to her," Adam said. "Mr. Massey brought me word yesterday as you was come."

They could neither of them say any more just yet, but stood before each other in silence; and Bartle Massey, too, who had put on his spectacles, seemed transfixed examining Dinah's face. But he recovered himself first, and said, "Sit down, young woman, sit down," placing the chair for her, and retiring to his old seat on the bed.

"Thank you, friend, I won't sit down," said Dinah, "for I must hasten back; she entreated me not to stay long away. What I came for, Adam Bede, was to pray you to go and see the poor sinner, and bid her farewell. She desires to ask your forgiveness, and it is meet you should see her to-day rather than in the early morning, when the time will be short."

Adam stood trembling, and at last sank down on his chair again.

"It won't be," he said; "it'll be put off—there'll perhaps come a pardon. Mr. Irwine said there was hope; he said I needn't quite give it up."

"That's a blessed thought to me," said Dinah, her eyes filling with tears. "It's a fearful thing hurrying her soul away so fast."

"But let what will be," she added, presently, "you will surely come, and let her speak the words that are in her heart. Although her poor soul is very dark, and discerns little beyond the things of the flesh, she is no longer hard; she is contrite—she has confessed all to me. The pride of her heart has given way, and she leans on me for help, and desires to be taught. This fills me with trust; for I cannot but think that the brethren sometimes err in measuring the Divine love by the sinner's knowledge. She is going to write a letter to

the friends at the Hall Farm for me to give them when she is gone ; and when I told her you were here, she said, ' I should like to say good-by to Adam, and ask him to forgive me.' You will come, Adam ? perhaps you will even now come back with me."

" I can't," Adam said ; " I can't say good-by while there's any hope. I'm listening, and listening—I can't think o' nothing but that. It can't be as she'll die that shameful death—I can't bring my mind to it."

He got up from his chair again, and looked away out of the window, while Dinah stood with compassionate patience. In a minute or two he turned round, and said,

" I *will* come, Dinah . . . to-morrow morning . . . if it must be. I may have more strength to bear it, if I know it *must* be. Tell her I forgive her ; tell her—I will come at the very last."

" I will not urge you against the voice of your own heart," said Dinah. " I must hasten back to her, for it is wonderful how she clings now, and was not willing to let me out of her sight. She used never to make any return to my affection before, but now tribulation has opened her heart. Farewell, Adam ; our heavenly Father comfort you, and strengthen you to bear all things." Dinah put out her hand, and Adam pressed it in silence.

Bartle Massey was getting up to lift the stiff latch of the door for her, but, before he could reach it, she had said, gently, " Farewell, friend," and was gone, with her light step, down the stairs.

" Well," said Bartle, taking off his spectacles, and putting them into his pocket, " if there must be women to make trouble in the world, it's but fair there should be women to be comforters under it ; and she's one—she's one. It's a pity she's a Methodist ; but there's no getting a woman without some foolishness or other."

Adam never went to bed that night ; the excitement of suspense, heightening with every hour that brought him nearer the fatal moment, was too great ; and, in spite of his entreaties, in spite of his promises that he would be perfectly quiet, the schoolmaster watched too.

" What does it matter to me, lad ?" Bartle said : " a night's sleep more or less. I shall sleep long enough, by and by, under ground. Let me keep thee company in trouble while I can."

It was a long and dreary night in that small chamber.

Adam would sometimes get up, and tread backward and forward along the short space from wall to wall ; then he would sit down and hide his face, and no sound would be heard but the ticking of the watch on the table, or the falling of a cinder from the fire which the schoolmaster carefully tended. Sometimes he would burst out into vehement speech.

"If I could ha' done anything to save her—if my bearing anything would ha' done any good . . . but t' have to sit still, and know it, and do nothing . . . it's hard for a man to bear . . . and to think o' what might ha' been now, if it hadn't been for *him*. . . O God, it's the very day we should ha' been married."

"Ay, my lad," said Bartle, tenderly, "it's heavy—it's heavy. But you must remember this: when you thought of marrying her, you'd a notion she'd got another sort of a nature inside her. You didn't think she could have got hardened in that little while to do what she's done."

"I know—I know that," said Adam. "I thought she was loving and tender-hearted, and wouldn't tell a lie, or act deceitful. How could I think any other way? And if he'd never come near her, and I'd married her, and been loving to her, and took care of her, she might never ha' done anything bad. What would it ha' signified—my having a bit o' trouble with her? It 'ud been nothing to this."

"There's no knowing, my lad—there's no knowing what might have come. The smart's bad for you to bear now: you must have time—you must have time. But I've that opinion of you, that you'll rise above it all, and be a man again; and there may good come out of this that we don't see."

"Good come out of it!" said Adam passionately. "That doesn't alter th' evil: *her* ruin can't be undone. I hate that talk o' people, as if there was a way o' making amends for everything. They'd more need be brought to see as the wrong they do can never be altered. When a man's spoiled his fellow-creature's life, he's no right to comfort himself with thinking good may come out of it: somebody else's good doesn't alter her shame and misery."

"Well, lad, well," said Bartle, in a gentle tone, strangely in contrast with his usual peremptoriness and impatience of contradiction, "it's likely enough I talk foolishness: I'm an old fellow, and it's a good many years since I was in trouble myself. It's easy finding reasons why other folks should be patient."

"Mr. Massey," said Adam, penitently, "I'm very hot and

hasty. I owe you something different ; but you mustn't take it ill of me."

"Not I, lad—not I."

So the night wore on in agitation, till the chill dawn and the growing light brought the tremulous quiet that comes on in the brink of despair. There would soon be no more suspense.

"Let us go to the prison now, Mr. Massey," said Adam, when he saw the hand of his watch at six.

"If there's any news come, we shall hear about it."

The people were astir already, moving rapidly, in one direction, through the streets. Adam tried not to think where they were going, as they hurried past him in that short space between his lodging and the prison gates. He was thankful when the gates shut him in from seeing those eager people.

No ; there was no news come—no pardon—no reprieve.

Adam lingered in the court half an hour, before he could bring himself to send word to Dinah that he was come. But a voice caught his ear : he could not shut out the words :

"The cart is to set off at half-past seven."

It must be said—the last good-by : there was no help.

In ten minutes from that time Adam was at the door of the cell. Dinah had sent him word that she could not come to him, she could not leave Hetty one moment ; but Hetty was prepared for the meeting.

He could not see her when he entered, for agitation deadened his senses, and the dim cell was almost dark to him. He stood a moment after the door closed behind him, trembling and stupefied.

But he began to see through the dimness—to see the dark eyes lifted up to him once more, but with no smile in them. O God, how sad they looked ! The last time they had met his was when he parted from her with his heart full of joyous, hopeful love, and they looked out with a tearful smile from a pink, dimpled, childish face. The face was marble now ; the sweet lips were pallid, and half-open, and quivering ; the dimples were all gone—all but one, that never went ; and the eyes—Oh ! the worst of all was the likeness they had to Hetty's. They were Hetty's eyes looking at him with that mournful gaze, as if she had come back to him from the dead to tell him of her misery.

She was clinging close to Dinah ; her cheek was against Dinah's. It seemed as if her last faint strength and hope

lay in that contact ; and the pitying love that shone out from Dinah's face looked like a visible pledge of the invisible Mercy.

When the sad eyes met—when Hetty and Adam looked at each other, she felt the change in him too, and it seemed to strike her with fresh fear. It was the first time she had seen any being whose face seemed to reflect the change in herself : Adam was a new image of the dreadful past and the dreadful present. She trembled more as she looked at him.

"Speak to him, Hetty," Dinah said ; "tell him what is in your heart."

Hetty obeyed her, like a little child.

"Adam . . . I'm very sorry . . . I behaved very wrong to you . . . will you forgive me . . . before I die?"

Adam answered with a half-sob : "Yes, I forgive thee, Hetty ; I forgave thee long ago."

It had seemed to Adam as if his brain would burst with the anguish of meeting Hetty's eyes in the first moments ; but the sound of her voice uttering these penitent words, touched a chord which had been less strained ; there was a sense of relief from what was becoming unbearable, and the rare tears came—they had never come before, since he had hung on Seth's neck in the beginning of his sorrow.

Hetty made an involuntary movement toward him ; some of the love that she had once lived in the midst of was come near her again. She kept hold of Dinah's hand, but she went up to Adam and said, timidly,

"Will you kiss me again, Adam, for all I've been so wicked?"

Adam took the blanched wasted hand she put out to him, and they gave each other the solemn unspeakable kiss of a life-long parting.

"And tell him," Hetty said, in rather a stronger voice, "tell him . . . for there's nobody else to tell him . . . as I went after him and couldn't find him . . . and I hated him and cursed him once . . . but Dinah says, I should forgive him . . . and I try . . . for else God won't forgive me."

There was a noise at the door of the cell now—the key was being turned in the lock, and when the door opened, Adam saw indistinctly that there were several faces there ; he was too agitated to see more—even to see that Mr. Irwine's face was one of them. He felt that the last preparations were beginning, and he could stay no longer. Room was silently made for him to depart, and he went to his chamber in loneliness, leaving Bartle Massey to watch and see the end.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE LAST MOMENT.

It was a sight that some people remembered better even than their own sorrows—the sight in that gray clear morning, when the fatal cart with the two young women in it was descried by the waiting, watching multitude, cleaving its way toward the hideous symbol of a deliberately-inflicted sudden death.

All Stoniton had heard of Dinah Morris, the young Methodist woman who had brought the obstinate criminal to confess, and there was as much eagerness to see her as to see the wretched Hetty.

But Dinah was hardly conscious of the multitude. When Hetty had caught sight of the vast crowd in the distance, she had clutched Dinah convulsively.

“Close your eyes, Hetty,” Dinah said, “and let us pray, without ceasing, to God.”

And in a low voice, as the cart went slowly along through the midst of the gazing crowd, she poured forth her soul with the wrestling intensity of a last pleading, for the trembling creature that clung to her and clutched her as the only visible sign of love and pity.

Dinah did not know that the crowd was silent, gazing at her with a sort of awe—she did not even know how near they were to the fatal spot, when the cart stopped, and she shrank appalled at a loud shout, hideous to her ear, like a vast yell of demons. Hetty’s shriek mingled with the sound, and they clasped each other with mutual horror.

But it was not a shout of execration—not a yell of exultant cruelty.

It was a shout of sudden excitement at the appearance of a horseman cleaving the crowd at full gallop. The horse is hot and distressed, but answers to the desperate spurring; the rider looks as if his eyes were glazed by madness, and he saw nothing but what was unseen by others. See, he has something in his hand—he is holding it up as if it were a signal.

The sheriff knows him; it is Arthur Donnithorne, carrying in his hand the hard-won release from death.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

ANOTHER MEETING IN THE WOOD.

THE next day, at evening, two men were walking from opposite points toward the same scene, drawn thither by a common memory. The scene was the Grove by Donnithorne Chase ; you know who the men were.

The old squire's funeral had taken place that morning, the will had been read, and now, in the first breathing space, Arthur Donnithorne had come out for a lonely walk, that he might look fixedly at the new future for him, and confirm himself in a sad resolution. He thought he could do that best in the Grove.

Adam, too, had come from Stoniton on Monday evening, and to-day he had not left home, except to go to the family at the Hall Farm, and tell them everything that Mr. Irwine had left untold. He had agreed with the Poyzers that he would follow them to their new neighborhood, wherever that might be ; for he meant to give up the management of the woods, and, as soon as it was practicable, he would wind up his business with Jonathan Burge, and settle with his mother and Seth in a home within reach of the friends to whom he felt bound by a mutual sorrow.

"Seth and me are sure to find work," he said. "A man that's got our trade at his finger ends is at home everywhere ; and we must make a new start. My mother won't stand in the way, for she's told me since I came home, she'd made up her mind to be buried in another parish, if I wished it, and if I'd be more comfortable elsewhere. It's wonderful how quiet she's been ever since I came back. It seems as if the very greatness o' the trouble had quieted and calmed her. We shall all be better in a new country, though there's some I shall be loath to leave behind. But I won't part from you and yours, if I can help it, Mr. Poyser. Trouble's made us kin."

"Ay, lad," said Martin. "We'll go out o' hearing o' that man's name. But I doubt we shall ne'er go far enough for folks not to find out as we've got them belonging to us as are transported o'er the seas, and war like to be hanged. We shall have that flying up in our faces, and our children's after us."

That was a long visit to the Hall Farm, and drew two strongly on Adam's energies for him to think of seeing others, or re-entering on his old occupations till the morrow. "But to-morrow," he said to himself, "I'll go to work again. I shall learn to like it again some time may be ; and it's right, whether I like it or not."

This evening was the last he would allow to be absorbed by sorrow ; suspense was gone now, and he must bear the unalterable. He was resolved not to see Arthur Donnithorne again, if it were possible to avoid him. He had no message to deliver from Hetty now, but Hetty had seen Arthur ; and Adam distrusted himself ; he had learned to dread the violence of his own feeling. That word of Mr. Irwine's—that he must remember what he had felt after giving the last blow to Arthur in the Grove—had remained with him.

These thoughts about Arthur, like all thoughts that are charged with strong feeling, were continually recurring, and they always called up the image of the Grove—of that spot under the overarching boughs where he had caught sight of the two bending figures, and had been possessed by sudden rage.

"I'll go and see it again to-night for the last time," he said ; "it'll do me good ; it'll make me feel over again what I felt when I'd knocked him down. I felt what poor empty work it was, as soon as I'd done it, *before* I began to think he might be dead."

In this way it happened that Arthur and Adam were walking toward the same spot at the same time.

Adam had on his working dress again now—for he had thrown off the other with a sense of relief as soon as he came home ; and if he had had the basket of tools over his shoulder, he might have been taken, with his pale wasted face, for the spectre of the Adam Bede who entered the Grove on that August evening eight months ago. But he had no basket of tools, and he was not walking with the old erectness, looking keenly round him ; his hands were thrust in his side pockets, and his eyes rested chiefly on the ground. He had not long entered the Grove, and now he paused before a beech. He knew that tree well ; it was the boundary mark of his youth—the sign to him of the time when some of his earliest, strongest feelings had left him. He felt sure they would never return. And yet, at this moment, there was a stirring of affection at the remembrance of that Arthur Donnithorne whom he had believed in before he had come up to this beech eight

months ago. It was affection for the dead ; *that* Arthur existed no longer.

He was disturbed by the sound of approaching footsteps, but the beech stood at a turning in the road, and he could not see who was coming, until the tall slim figure in deep mourning suddenly stood before him at only two yards' distance. They both started, and looked at each other in silence. Often, in the last fortnight, Adam had imagined himself as close to Arthur as this, assailing him with words that should be as harrowing as the voice of remorse, forcing upon him a just share in the misery he had caused ; and often, too, he had told himself that such a meeting had better not be. But in imagining the meeting he had always seen Arthur as he had met him on that evening in the Grove, florid, careless, light of speech ; and the figure before him touched him with the signs of suffering. Adam knew what suffering was—he could not lay a cruel finger on a bruised man. He felt no impulse that he needed to resist : silence was more just than reproach. Arthur was the first to speak.

"Adam," he said, quietly, "it may be a good thing that we have met here, for I wished to see you. I should have asked to see you to-morrow."

He paused, but Adam said nothing.

"I know it is painful to you to meet me," Arthur went on, "but it is not likely to happen again for years to come."

"No, sir," said Adam, coldly, "that was what I meant to write to you to-morrow, as it would be better all dealings should be an end between us, and somebody else put in my place."

Arthur felt the answer keenly, and it was not without an effort that he spoke again.

"It was partly on that subject I wished to speak to you. I don't want to lessen your indignation against me, or ask you to do anything for my sake. I only wish to ask you if you will help me to lessen the evil consequences of the past, which is unchangeable. I don't mean consequences to myself, but to others. It is but little I can do, I know. I know the worst consequences will remain ; but something may be done, and you can help me. Will you listen to me patiently?"

"Yes, sir," said Adam, after some hesitation ; "I'll hear what it is. If I can help mend anything, I will. Anger 'ul mend nothing I know, We've had enough o' that."

"I was going to the Hermitage," said Arthur. "Will you go there with me and sit down? We can talk better there."

The Hermitage had never been entered since they left it together, for Arthur had locked up the key in his desk. And now, when he opened the door, there was the candle burned out in the socket ; there was the chair in the same place where Adam remembered sitting ; there was the waste-paper basket full of scraps, and deep down in it, Arthur felt in an instant, there was the little pink silk handkerchief. It would have been painful to enter this place if their previous thoughts had been less painful.

They sat down opposite each other in the old places, and Arthur said, " I'm going away, Adam ; I'm going into the army."

Poor Arthur felt that Adam ought to be affected by this announcement—ought to have a movement of sympathy toward him. But Adam's lips remained firmly closed, and the expression of his face unchanged.

" What I want to say to you," Arthur continued, " is this : one of my reasons for going away is, that no one else may leave Hayslope—may leave their home on my account. I would do anything, there is no sacrifice I would not make, to prevent any farther injury to others through my—through what has happened."

Arthur's words had precisely the opposite effect to that he had anticipated. Adam thought he perceived in them that notion of compensation for irretrievable wrong, that self-soothing attempt to make evil bear the same fruits as good, which most of all roused his indignation. He was as strongly impelled to look painful facts right in the face, as Arthur was to turn away his eyes from them. Moreover, he had the wakeful suspicious pride of a poor man in the presence of a rich man. He felt his old severity returning as he said,

" The time's passed for that, sir. A man should make sacrifices to keep clear of doing a wrong ; sacrifices won't undo it when it's done. When people's feelings have got a deadly wound, they can't be cured with favors."

" Favors ! " said Arthur passionately ; " no ; how can you suppose I meant that ? But the Poyzers—Mr. Irwine tells me the Poyzers mean to leave the place where they have lived so many years—for generations. Don't you see, as Mr. Irwine does, that if they could be persuaded to overcome the feeling that drives them away, it would be much better for them in the end to remain on the old spot, among the friends and neighbors who know them ? "

" That's true," said Adam, coldly. " But then, sir, folks's

feelings are not so easily overcome. It'll be hard for Martin Poyser to go to a strange place among strange faces, when he's been bred up on the Hall Farm, and his father before him ; but then it 'ud be harder for a man with his feelings to stay. I don't see how the thing's to be made any other than hard. There's a sort o' damage, sir, that can't be make up for.

Arthur was silent some moments. In spite of other feelings, dominant in him this evening, his pride winced under Adam's mode of treating him. Wasn't he himself suffering? Was not he, too, obliged to renounce his most cherished hopes? It was now as it had been eight months ago—Adam was forcing Arthur to feel more intensely the irrevocableness of his own wrong-doing : he was presenting the sort of resistance that was the most irritating to Arthur's eager, ardent nature. But his anger was subdued by the same influence that had subdued Adam's when they first confronted each other—by the marks of suffering in a long-familiar face. The momentary struggle ended in the feeling that he could bear a great deal from Adam, to whom he had been the occasion of bearing so much; but there was a touch of pleading, boyish vexation in his tone as he said,

"But people may make injuries worse by unreasonable conduct—by giving way to anger, and satisfying that for the moment, instead of thinking what will be the effect in the future.

"If I were going to stay here and act as landlord," he added, presently, with still more eagerness—"if I were careless about what I've done—what I've been the cause of, you would have some excuse, Adam, for going away and encouraging others to go. You would have some excuse then for trying to make the evil worse. But when I tell you I'm going away for years—when you know what that means for me, how it cuts off every plan of happiness I've ever formed—it is impossible for a sensible man like you to believe that there is any real ground for the Poyser's refusing to remain. I know their feeling about disgrace—Mr. Irwine has told me all ; but he is of opinion that they might be persuaded out of this idea that they are disgraced in the eyes of their neighbors, and that they can't remain on my estate, if you would join him in his efforts—if you would stay yourself, and go on managing the old woods."

Arthur paused a moment, and then added, pleadingly, "You know that's a good work to do for the sake of other people, besides the owner ; and you don't know but that they

may have a better owner soon, whom you will like to work for. If I die, my cousin Tradgett will have the estate and take my name. He is a good fellow."

Adam could not help being moved : it was impossible for him not to feel that this was the voice of the honest, warm-hearted Arthur whom he had loved and been proud of in old days ; but nearer memories would not be thrust away. He was silent ; yet Arthur saw an answer in his face that induced him to go on with growing earnestness.

"And then if you would talk to the Poysers—if you would talk the matter over with Mr. Irwine—he means to see you to-morrow—and then if you would join your arguments to his to prevail on them not to go. . . . I know, of course, that they would not accept any favor from me—I mean nothing of that kind ; but I'm sure they would suffer less in the end. Irwine thinks so too ; and Mr. Irwine is to have the chief authority on the estate—he has consented to undertake that. They will really be under no man but one whom they respect and like. It would be the same with you, Adam ; and it could be nothing but a desire to give me worse pain that could incline you to go."

Arthur was silent again for a little while, and then said, with some agitation in his voice,

"I wouldn't act so toward you, I know. If you were in my place and I in yours, I should try to help you to do the best."

Adam made a hasty movement on his chair, and looked on the ground. Arthur went on :

"Perhaps you've never done anything you've had bitterly to repent of in your life, Adam ; if you had you would be more generous. You would know then that it's worse for me than for you."

Arthur rose from his seat with the last words, and went to one of the windows, looking out and turning his back on Adam, as he continued, passionately,

"Haven't I loved her too ? Didn't I see her yesterday ? Sha'n't I carry the thought of her about with me as much as you will ? And don't you think you would suffer more if you'd been in fault ?"

There was silence for several minutes for the struggle in Adam's mind was not easily decided. Facile natures, whose emotions have little permanence can hardly understand how much inward resistance he overcame before he rose from his seat and turned toward Arthur. Arthur heard the movement,

and turning round, met the sad but softened look with which Adam said,

"It's true what you say, sir, I'm hard—it's in my nature. I was too hard with my father for doing wrong. I've been a bit hard t' everybody but *her*. I felt as if nobody pitied her enough—her suffering cut into me so ; and when I thought the folks at the Farm were too hard with her, I said I'd never be hard to anybody myself again. But feeling overmuch about her has perhaps made me unfair to you. I've known what it is in my life to repent and feel it's too late ; I felt I'd been too harsh to my father when he was gone from me—I feel it now, when I think of him. I've no right to be hard towards them as have done wrong and repent."

Adam spoke these words with the firm distinctness of a man who is resolved to leave nothing unsaid that he is bound to say ; but he went on with more hesitation.

"I wouldn't shake hands with you once, sir, when you asked me—but if you're willing to do it now, for all I refused then" . . .

Arthur's white hand was in Adam's large grasp in an instant, and with that action there was a strong rush, on both sides, of that old, boyish affection.

"Adam," Arthur said, impelled to full confession now, "it would never have happened, if I'd known you loved her. That would have helped to save me from it. And I *did* struggle ; I never meant to injure her. I deceived you afterward—and that led on to worse ; but I thought it was forced upon me, I thought it was the best thing I could do. And in that letter, I told her to let me know if she were in any trouble ; don't think I would not have done everything I could. But I was all wrong from the very first, and horrible wrong has come of it. God knows I'd give my life if I could undo it."

They sat down again opposite each other, and Adam said, tremulously,

"How did she seem when you left her, sir?"

"Don't ask me, Adam," Arthur said ; "I feel sometimes as if I should go mad with thinking of her looks and what she said to me, and then, that I couldn't get a full pardon—that I couldn't save her from that wretched fate of being transported—that I can do nothing for her all those years ; and she may die under it, and never know comfort any more."

"Ah ! sir," said Adam, for the first time feeling his own pain merged in sympathy for Arthur, "you and me'll often

be thinking o' the same thing, when we're a long way off one another. I'll pray God to help you, as I pray him to help me."

"But there's that sweet woman—that Dinah Morris," Arthur said, pursuing his own thoughts, and not knowing what had been the sense of Adam's words, "she says she shall stay with her to the very last moment—till she goes; and the poor thing clings to her as if she found some comfort in her. I could worship that woman; I don't know what I should do if she were not there. Adam, you will see her when she comes back; I could say nothing to her yesterday—nothing of what I felt toward her. Tell her," Arthur went on, hurriedly, as if he wanted to hide the emotion with which he spoke, while he took off his chain and watch—"tell her I asked you to give her this in remembrance of me—of the man to whom she is the one source of comfort, when he thinks of . . . I know she doesn't care about such things—or anything else I can give her for its own sake. But she will use the watch—I shall like to think of her using it."

"I'll give it to her, sir," Adam said, "and tell her your words. She told me she should come back to the people at the Hall Farm."

"And you *will* persuade the Poyzers to stay, Adam," said Arthur, reminded of the subject which both of them had forgotten in the first interchange of revived friendship. "You *will* stay yourself, and help Mr. Irwine to carry out the repairs and improvements on the estate?"

"There's one thing, sir, that perhaps you don't take account of," said Adam, with hesitating gentleness, "and that was what made me hang back longer. You see, it's the same with both me and the Poyzers; if we stay, it's for our own worldly interest, and it looks as if we'd put up with anything for the sake o' that. I know that's what they'll feel, and I can't help feeling a little of it myself. When folks have got an honorable, independent spirit, they don't like to do anything that might make 'em seem base-minded."

"But no one who knows you will think that, Adam; that is not a reason strong enough against a course that is really more generous, more unselfish than the other. And it will be known—it shall be made known, that both you and the Poyzers staid at my entreaty. Adam, don't try to make things worse for me; I'm punished enough without that."

"No, sir, no," Adam said, looking at Arthur with mournful affection. "God forbid I should make things worse for

you. I used to wish I could do it, in my passion—but that was when I thought you didn't feel enough. I'll stay, sir ; I'll do the best I can. It's all I've got to think of now—to do my work well, and make the world a bit better place for them as can enjoy it."

"Then we'll part now, Adam. You will see Mr. Irwine to-morrow, and consult with him about everything."

"Are you going soon, sir?" said Adam.

"As soon as possible—after I have made the necessary arrangements. Good-by, Adam. I shall think of you going about the old place."

"Good-by, sir. God bless you."

The hands were clasped once more, and Adam left the Hermitage, feeling that sorrow was more bearable now, hatred was gone.

As soon as the door was closed behind him, Arthur went to the waste-paper basket and took out the little pink silk handkerchief.

CHAPTER XLIX.

AT THE HALL FARM.

THE first autumnal afternoon sunshine of 1801—more than eighteen months after that parting of Adam and Arthur in the Hermitage—was on the yard at the Hall Farm, and the bull-dog was in one of his most excited moments ; for it was that hour of the day when the cows were being driven into the yard for their afternoon milking. No wonder the patient beasts ran confusedly into the wrong places, for the alarming din of the bull-dog was mingled with more distant sounds which the timid feminine creatures, with pardonable superstition, imagined also to have some relation to their own movements—with the tremendous crack of the wagoner's whip, the roar of his voice, and the booming thunder of the wagon, as it left the rick-yard empty of its golden load.

The milking of the cows was a sight Mrs. Poyser loved, and at this hour on mild days she was usually standing at the house door, with her knitting in her hands, in quiet contemplation, only heightened to a keener interest when the vicious yellow cow, who had once kicked over a pailful of precious

milk, was about to undergo the preventive punishment of having her hinder leg strapped.

To-day, however, Mrs. Poyser gave but a divided attention to the arrival of the cows, for she was in eager discussion with Dinah, who was stitching Mr. Poyser's shirt-collars and had borne patiently to have her thread broken three times by Totty pulling at her arm with a sudden insistence that she should look at "Baby," that is, at a large wooden doll with no legs and a long skirt, whose bald head Totty, seated in her small chair at Dinah's side, was caressing and pressing to her fat cheek with much fervor. Totty is larger by more than two years' growth than when you first saw her, and she has on a black frock under her pinafore; Mrs. Poyser too has on a black gown, which seems to heighten the family likeness between her and Dinah. In other respects there is little outward change now discernible in our old friends, or in the pleasant house-place, bright with polished oak and pewter.

"I never saw the like to you, Dinah," Mrs. Poyser was saying, "when you've once took anything into your head; there's no more moving you than the rooted tree. You may say what you like, but I don't believe *that's* religion; for what's the sermon on the Mount about, as you're so fond o' reading to the boys, but doing what other folks 'ud have you do? But if it was anything unreasonable they wanted you to do, like taking your cloak off and giving it to 'em, or letting 'em slap you i' the face, I dare say you'd be ready enough; it's only when one 'ud have you do what's plain common-sense and good for yourself, as you're obstinate the other way."

"Nay, dear aunt," said Dinah, smiling slightly as she went on with her work, "I'm sure your wish 'ud be a reason for me to do anything that I didn't feel it was wrong to do."

"Wrong! You drive me past bearing. What is there wrong, I should like to know, i' staying along wi' your own friends, as are th' happier for having you with 'em, an' are willing to provide for you, even if your work didn't more nor pay 'em for the bit o' sparrow' svictual y' eat, and the bit o' rag you put on! 'An' who is it, I should like to know, as you're bound t' help and comfort i' the world more nor your own flesh and blood—an' me th' only aunt you've got above-ground, an' am brought to the brink o' the grave welly every winter as comes, an' there's the child as sits beside you 'ull break her little heart when you go, an' the grandfather not been dead a twelvemonth, an' your uncle 'ull miss you so as never was—a-lighting his pipe an' waiting on him, an' now I can

trust you wi' the butter, an' have had all the trouble o' teaching you, an' there's all the sewing to be done, an' I must have a strange gell out o' Treddles'on to do it—an' all because you must go back to that bare heap o' stones as the very crows fly over an' won't stop at."

"Dear aunt Rachel," said Dinah, looking up in Mrs. Poyser's face, "it's your kindness makes you say I'm useful to you. You don't really want me now; for Nancy and Molly are clever at their work, and you're in good health now, by the blessing of God, and my uncle is of a cheerful countenance again, and you have neighbors and friends not a few—some of them come to sit with my uncle almost daily. Indeed, you will not miss me; and at Snowfield there are brethren and sisters in great need, who have none of those comforts you have round you. I feel that I am called back to those among whom my lot was first cast; I feel drawn again toward the hills where I used to be blessed in carrying the word of life to the sinful and desolate."

"You feel! yes," said Mrs. Poyser, returning from a parenthetic glance at the cows. "That's allays the reason I'm to sit down wi', when you've a mind to do anything contrary. What do you want to be preaching for more than you're preaching now? Don't you go off, the Lord knows where, every Sunday, a-preaching and praying? an' haven't you got Methodists enow at Treddles'on to go and look at, if church folks' faces are too handsome to please you? an' isn't there them i' this parish as you've got under hand, and they're like enough to make friends wi' old Harry again as soon as your back is turned? There's that Bessy Cranage—she'll be flaunting i' new finery three weeks after you're gone, I'll be bound; she'll no more go on in her new ways without you, than a dog 'ull stand on its hind-legs when ther's nobody looking. But I suppose it doesna matter so much about folks's souls i' this country, else you'd be for staying with your own aunt, for she's none so good but what you might help her to be better."

There was a certain something in Mrs. Poyser's voice just then, which she did not wish to be noticed, so she turned round hastily to look at the clock, and said; "See there! It's tea-time; an' if Martin's i' the rick-yard, he'll like a cup. Here, Totty, my chicken, let mother put your bonnet on, and then you go out into the rick-yard and see if father's there, and tell him he mustn't go away again without coming t' have a cup o' tea; and tell your brothers to come in too."

Totty trotted off in her flapping bonnet, while Mrs. Poy-

ser set out the bright oak table, and reached down the tea-cups.

"You talk o' them gells Nancy and Molly being clever i' their work," she began again; "it's fine talking. They're all the same, clever or stupid—one can't trust 'em out o' one's sight a minute. They want somebody's eye on 'em constant if they're to be kept to their work. An' suppose I'm ill again this winter, as I was the winter before last, who's to look after 'em then, if you're gone? An' there's that blessed child—something's sure t' happen to her—they'll let her tumble into the fire, or get at the kettle wi' the boiling lard in't, or some mischief as 'ull lame her for life; an' it'll be all your fault, Dinah."

"Aunt," said Dinah, "I promise to come back to you in the winter if you're ill. Don't think I will ever stay away from you if you're in real want of me. But indeed it is needful for my own soul that I should go away from this life of ease and luxury, in which I have all things too richly to enjoy—at least that I should go away for a short space. No one can know but myself what are my inward needs, and the besetments I am most in danger from. Your wish for me to stay is not a call of duty which I refuse to hearken to because it is against my own desires; it is a temptation that I must resist, lest the love of the creature should become like a mist in my soul shutting out the heavenly light."

"It passes my cunning to know what you mean by ease and luxury," said Mrs. Poyser, as she cut the bread and butter. "It's true there's good victual enough about you, as nobody shall ever say I don't provide enough and to spare, but if there's ever a bit o' odds an' ends as nobody else 'ud eat, you're sure to pick it out . . . but look there! there's Adam Bede a carrying the little un in. I wonder how it is he's come so early."

Mrs. Poyser hastened to the door for the pleasure of looking at her darling in a new position, with love in her eyes, but reproof on her tongue.

"Oh, for shame, Totty! Little gells o' five years old should be ashamed to be carried. Why, Adam, she'll break your arm, such a big gell as that; set her down for shame!"

"Nay, nay," said Adam, "I can lift her with my hand, I've no need to take my arm to it."

Totty, looking as serenely unconscious of remark as a fat white puppy, was set down at the door-place, and the mother enforced her reproof with a shower of kisses.

"You're surprised to see me at this hour o' the day," said Adam.

"Yes, but come in," said Mrs. Poyser, making way for him; "there's no bad news, I hope?"

"No, nothing bad," Adam answered, as he went up to Dinah and put out his hand to her. She had laid down her work and stood up, instinctively, as he approached her. A faint blush died away from her pale cheek as she put her hand in his, and looked up at him timidly.

"It's an errand to you brought me, Dinah," said Adam, apparently unconscious that he was holding her hand all the while; "mother's a bit ailing, and she's set her heart on your coming to stay the night with her, if you'll be so kind. I told her I'd call and ask you as I came from the village. She overworks herself, and I can't persuade her to have a little girl t' help her. I don't know what's to be done."

Adam released Dinah's hand as he ceased speaking, and was expecting an answer; but before she had opened her lips, Mrs. Poyser said,

"Look there now! I told you there was folks enow t' help i' this parish without going farther off. There's Mrs. Bede getting as old and cas'alty as can be, and she won't let anybody but you go a-nigh her hardly. The folks at Snowfield have learned by this time to do better wi'out you nor she can."

"I'll put my bonnet on and set off directly, if you don't want anything done first, aunt," said Dinah, folding up her work.

"Yes, I do want something done. I want you t' have your tea, child; it's all ready; and you'll have a cup, Adam, if y' arena in too big a hurry."

"Yes, I'll have a cup, please; and then I'll walk with Dinah. I'm going straight home, for I've got a lot o' timber valuations to write out."

"Why, Adam, lad, are you here?" said Mr. Poyser, entering, warm and coatless, with the two black-eyed boys behind him, still looking as much like him as two small elephants are like a large one. "How is it we've got sight o' you so long before foddering-time?"

"I came on an errand for mother," said Adam. "She's got a touch of her old complaint, and she wants Dinah to go and stay with her a bit."

"Well, we'll spare her for your mother a little while," said Mr. Poyser. "But we wonna spare her for anybody else, on'y her husband."

"Husband!" said Marty, who was at the most prosaic and literal period of the boyish mind, "why Dinah hasn't got a husband?"

"Spare her," said Mrs. Poyser, placing a seed-cake on the table, and then seating herself to pour out the tea. "But we must spare her, it seems, and not for a husband neither, but for her own megrims. Tommy, what are you doing to your little sister's doll? making the child naughty, when she'd be good if you'd let her. You shanna have a morsel o' cake if you behave so."

Tommy, with true brotherly sympathy, was amusing himself by turning Dolly's skirt over her bald head, and exhibiting her truncated body to the general scorn—an indignity which cut Totty to the heart.

"What do you think Dinah's been a-telling me since dinner-time?" Mrs. Poyser continued, looking at her husband.

"Eh! I'm a poor un at guessing," said Mr. Poyser.

"Why, she means to go back to Snowfield again, and work i' the mill, and starve herself, as she used to do, like a creature as has got no friends."

Mr. Poyser did not readily find words to express his unpleasant astonishment; he only looked from his wife to Dinah, who had now seated herself beside Totty, as a bulwark against brotherly playfulness, and was busying herself with the children's tea. If he had been given to making general reflections, it would have occurred to him that there was certainly a change come over Dinah, for she never used to change color; but, as it was, he merely observed that her face was flushed at that moment. Mr. Poyser thought she looked the prettier for it; it was a flush no deeper than the petal of a monthly rose. Perhaps it came because her uncle was looking at her so fixedly, but there is no knowing; for just then Adam was saying, with quiet surprise,

"Why, I hoped Dinah was settled among us for life. I thought she'd given up the notion o' going back to her old country."

"Thought! yis?" said Mrs. Poyser; "and so would anybody else ha' thought as had got their right end up'ard. But I suppose you must *be* a Methodist to know what a Methodist 'ull do. It's ill guessing what the bats are flying after."

"Why, what have we done to you, Dinah, as you must go away from us?" said Mr. Poyser, still pausing over his tea-cup. "It's like breaking your word welly; for your aunt never had no thought but you'd make this your home."

"Nay, uncle," said Dinah, trying to be quite calm. "When I first came I said it was only for a time, as long I could be of any comfort to my aunt."

"Well, an' who said you'd ever left off being a comfort to me?" said Mrs. Poyser. "If you didna mean to stay wi' me you'd better never ha' come. Them as ha' never had a cushion don't miss it."

"Nay, nay," said Mr. Poyser, who objected to exaggerated views. "Thee mustna say so; we should ha' been ill off wi' out her Lady-day was a twelvemont'; we mun be thankful for that, whether she stays or no. But I canna think what she mun leave a good home for, to go back int' a country where the land, most on't, isna worth ten shillings an acre, rent and profits."

"Why, that's just the reason she wants to go, as fur as she can give a reason," said Mrs. Poyser. "She says this country's too comfortable, and there's too much t' eat, an' folks arena miserable enough. And she's going next week; I canna turn her, say what I will. It's allays the way wi' them meek-face'd people; you may's well pelt a bag o' feathers as talk to 'em. But I say it isna religion, to be so obstinate—is it now, Adam?"

Adam saw that Dinah was more disturbed than he had ever seen her by any matter relating to herself, and, anxious to relieve her if possible, he said, looking at her affectionately,

"Nay, I can't find fault with anything Dinah does. I believe her thoughts are better than our guesses, let 'em be what they may. I should ha' been thankful for her to stay among us; but if she thinks well to go, I wouldn't cross her, or make it hard to her by objecting. We owe her something different to that."

As it often happens, the words intended to relieve her were just too much for Dinah's susceptible feelings at this moment. The tears came into the gray eyes too fast to be hidden; and she got up hurriedly, meaning to be understood that she was going to put on her bonnet.

"Mother, what's Dinah crying for?" said Totty. "She isn't a naughty dell."

"Thee'st gone a bit too fur," said Mr. Poyser. "We've no right t' interfere with her doing as she likes. An' thee'dst be as angry as could be wi' me if I said a word against anything she did."

"Because you'd very like be finding fault wi' out reason," said Mrs. Poyser. "But there's reason i' what I' say, else I

shouldna say it. It's easy talking for them as can't love her so well as her own aunt does. An' me got so used to her ! I shall feel as uneasy as a new-sheared sheep when she's gone from me. An' to think of her leaving a parish where she's so looked on. There's Mr. Irwine makes as much of her as if she was a lady, for all her being a Methodist, an' wi' that maggot o' preaching in her head ; God fergi' me if I'm i' the wrong to call it so."

"Ay," said Mr. Poyser, looking jocose ; "but thee dostna tell Adam what he said to thee about it one day. The missis was saying, Adam, as the preaching was th' only fault to be found wi' Dinah, and Mr. Irwine says, 'But you mustn't find fault with her for that, Mrs. Poyser ; you forget she's got no husband to preach to. I'll answer for it, you give Poyser many a good sermon.' The parson had thee there," Mr. Poyser added, laughing unctuously. "I told Bartle Massey on it, an' he laughed too."

"Yes, it's a small joke sets men laughing when they sit a staring at one another with a pipe i' their mouths," said Mrs. Poyser. "Give Bartle Massey his way, and he'd have all the sharpness to himself. If the chaff-cutter had the making of us, we should all be straw, I reckon. Totty, my chicken, go up stairs to cousin Dinah, and see what she's doing, and give her a pretty kiss."

This errand was devised for Totty as a means of checking certain threatening symptoms about the corners of the mouth ; for Tommy, no longer expectant of cake, was lifting up his eyelids with his forefingers and turning his eyeballs toward Totty, in a way that she felt to be disagreeably personal.

"You're rare and busy how—eh, Adam?" said Mr. Poyser. "Burge's getting so bad wi' his asthma, its well if he'll ever do much riding about again."

"Yes, we've got a pretty bit o' building on hand now," said Adam ; "what with the repairs on th' estate, and the new houses at Treddles'on."

"I'll bet a penny that new house Burge is building on his own bit o' land is for him and Mary to go to," said Mr. Poyser. "He'll be for laying by business soon, I'll warrant, and be wanting you to take to it all, and pay him so much by th' 'ear. We shall see you living on th' hill before another twelvemont's over."

"Well," said Adam, "I should like t' have the business in my own hands. It isn't as I mind much about getting

any more money ; we've enough and to spare now, with only our two selves and mother ; but I should like to have my own way about things ; I could try plans then as I can't do now."

"You get on pretty well wi' the new steward, I reckon?" said Mr. Poyser.

"Yes, yes ; he's a sensible man enough ; understands farming—he's carrying on the draining, and all that, capital. You must go some day toward to the Stonyshire side, and see what alterations they're making. But he's got no notion about buildings ; you can so seldom get hold of a man as can turn his brains to more nor one thing ; it's just as if they wore blinkers like th' horses, and could see nothing o' one side of 'em. Now, there's Mr. Irwine has got notions o' building more nor most architects ; for as for th' architects, they set up to be fine fellows, but the most of 'em don't know where to set a chimney so as it shan't be quarrelling with a door. My notion is, a practical builder, that's got a bit o' taste, makes the best architect for common things ; and I've ten times the pleasure i' seeing after the work when I've made the plan myself."

Mr. Poyser listened with an admiring interest to Adam's discourse on building ; but perhaps it suggested to him that the building of his corn-rick had been proceeding a little too long without the control of the master's eye ; for when Adam had done speaking, he got up and said,

"Well, lad, I'll bid you good-by, now, for I'm off to the rick-yard again."

Adam rose too, for he saw Dinah entering, with her bonnet on, and a little basket in her hand, preceded by Totty.

"You're ready, I see, Dinah," Adam said ; "so we'll set off, for the sooner I'm at home the better."

"Mother," said Totty, with her treble pipe, "Dinah was saying her prayers and crying ever so."

"Hush ! hush !" said the mother ; "little gells mustn't chatter."

Whereupon the father, shaking with silent laughter, set Totty on the white deal table, and desired her to kiss him. Mr. and Mrs. Poyser, you perceive, had no correct principles of education.

"Come back to-morrow, if Mrs. Bede doesn't want you, Dinah," said Mrs. Poyser ; "but you can stay, you know, if she is ill."

So, when the good-bys had been said, Dinah and Adam left the Hall Farm together.

CHAPTER L.

IN THE COTTAGE.

ADAM did not ask Dinah to take his arm when they got out into the lane. He had never yet done so, often as they had walked together ; for he had observed that she had never walked arm-in-arm with Seth, and he thought perhaps that kind of support was not agreeable to her. So they walked apart, though side by side, and the close poke of her little black bonnet hid her face from him.

"You can't be happy, then, to make the Hall Farm your home, Dinah?" Adam said, with the quiet interest of a brother, who has no anxiety for himself in the matter. "It's a pity, seeing they're so fond of you."

"You know, Adam, my heart is as their heart, so far as love for them and care for their welfare goes ; but they are in no present need, their sorrows are healed, and I feel that I am called back to my old work, in which I found a blessing that I have missed of late in the midst of too abundant worldly good. I know it is a vain thought to flee from the work that God appoints us, for the sake of finding a greater blessing to our own souls, as if we could choose for ourselves where we shall find the fulness of the Divine Presence, instead of seeking it where alone it is to be found, in loving obedience. But now, I believe, I have a clear showing that my work lies elsewhere—at least for a time. In the years to come, if my aunt's health should fail, or she should otherwise need me, I shall return."

"You know best, Dinah," said Adam. "I don't believe you'd go against the wishes of them that love you, and are akin to you, without a good and sufficient reason in your own conscience. I've no right to say anything about my being sorry : you know well enough what cause I have to put you above every other friend I've got ; and if it had been ordered so that you could ha' been my sister, and lived with us all our lives, I should ha' counted it the greatest blessing as could happen to us now ; but Seth tells me there's no hope o' that : your feelings are different ; and perhaps I'm taking too much upon me to speak about it."

Dinah made no answer, and they walked on in silence for some yards, till they came to the stone stile ; where, as Adam had passed through first, and turned round to give her his hand while she mounted the unusually high step, she could not prevent him from seeing her face. It struck him with surprise ; for the gray eyes, usually so mild and grave, had the bright uneasy glance which accompanies suppressed agitation, and the slight flush in her cheeks, with which she had come down stairs, was heightened to a deep rose-color. She looked as if she was only sister to Dinah. Adam was silent with surprise and conjecture for some moments, and then he said,

"I hope I've not hurt or displeased you by what I've said, Dinah : perhaps I was making too free. I've no wish different from what you see to be best ; and I'm satisfied for you to live thirty miles off, if you think it right. I shall think of you just as much as I do now ; for you're bound up with what I can no more help remembering than I can help my heart beating."

Poor Adam ! Thus do men blunder. Dinah made no answer, but she presently said,

"Have you heard any news from that poor young man since we last spoke of him ?"

Dinah always called Arthur so ; she had never lost the image of him as she had seen him in the prison.

"Yes," said Adam. "Mr. Irwine read me part of a letter from him yesterday. It's pretty certain, they say, that there'll be a peace soon, though nobody believes it'll last long ; but he says he doesn't mean to come home. He's no heart for it yet ; and it's better for others that he should keep away. Mr. Irwine thinks he's in the right not to come : it's a sorrowful letter. He asks about you and the Poyzers, as he always does. There's one thing in the letter cuts me a good deal : 'You can't think what an old fellow I feel,' he says ; 'I make no schemes now. I'm the best when I've a good day's march or fighting before me.'"

"He's of a rash, warm-hearted nature, like Esau, for whom I have always felt great pity," said Dinah. "That meeting between the brothers, where Esau is so loving and generous, and Jacob so timid and distrustful, notwithstanding his sense of the Divine favor, has always touched me greatly. Truly, I have been tempted sometimes to say, that Jacob was of a mean spirit. But that is our trial : we must learn to see the good in the midst of much that is unlovely."

"Ah!" said Adam, "I like to read about Moses best, in th' Old Testament. He carried a hard business well through, and died when other folks were going to reap the fruits; a man must have courage to look at his life so, and think what'll come of it after he's dead and gone. A good solid bit o' work lasts; if it's only laying a floor down, somebody's the better for it being done well, besides the man as does it."

They were both glad to talk of subjects that were not personal, and in this way they went on till they passed the bridge across the Willow Brook, when Adam turned round and said,

"Ah! here's Seth. I thought he'd be home soon. Does he know of your going, Dinah?"

"Yes, I told him last Sabbath."

Adam remembered now that Seth had come home much depressed on Sunday evening, a circumstance which had been very unusual with him of late, for the happiness he had in seeing Dinah every week seemed long to have outweighed the pain of knowing she would never marry him. This evening he had his habitual air of dreamy benignant contentment, until he came quite close to Dinah, and saw the traces of tears on her delicate eyelids and eyelashes. He gave one rapid glance at his brother; but Adam was evidently quite outside the current of emotion that had shaken Dinah; he wore his everyday look of unexpectant calm. Seth tried not to let Dinah see that he had noticed her face, and only said,

"I'm thankful you're come, Dinah, for mother's been hundering after the sight of you all day. She began to talk of you the first thing in the morning."

When they entered the cottage, Lisbeth was seated in her arm-chair, too tired with setting out the evening meal, a task she always performed a long time beforehand, to go and meet them at the door as usual when she heard the approaching footsteps.

"Coom, child, thee't coom at last," she said, when Dinah went toward her. "What dost mane by lavin' me a week, an' ne'er coomin' a-nigh me?"

"Dear friend," said Dinah, taking her hand, "you're not well. If I'd known it sooner, I'd have come."

"An' how's thee t' know if thee dostna coom? Th' lads o'ny know what I tell 'em; as long as ye can stir hand and foot the men think ye're hearty. But I'm none so bad, on'y a bit of cold sets me achin'. An' th' lads tease me so t' ha' somebody wi' me t' do the work—they make me ache wuss wi' talkin'. If thee'dst come and stay wi' me, they'd let me

alone. The Poysers canna want thee so bad as I do. But take thy bonnet off, an' let me look at thee."

Dinah was moving away, but Lisbeth held her fast, while she was taking off her bonnet, and looked at her face, as one looks into a newly-gathered snowdrop, to renew the old impressions of purity and gentleness.

"What's the matter wi' thee?" said Lisbeth, in astonishment; "thee'st been a-cryin'."

"It's only a grief that'll pass away," said Dinah, who did not wish just now to call forth Lisbeth's remonstrances by disclosing her intention to leave Hayslope. "You shall know about it shortly—we'll talk of it to-night. I shall stay with you to-night."

Lisbeth was pacified by this prospect; and she had the whole evening to talk with Dinah alone; for there was a new room in the cottage, you remember, built nearly two years ago, in the expectation of a new inmate; and here Adam always sat when he had writing to do, or plans to make. Seth sat there too this evening, for he knew his mother would like to have Dinah all to herself.

There were two pretty pictures on the two sides of the wall in the cottage. On one side there was the broad-shouldered, large-featured, hardy old woman, in her blue jacket and buff kerchief, with her dim-eyed anxious looks turned continually on the lily face and the slight form in the black dress that were either moving lightly about in helpful activity, or seated close by the old woman's arm-chair, holding her withered hand, with eyes lifted toward her to speak a language which Lisbeth understood far better than the Bible or the hymn-book. She would scarcely listen to reading at all to-night. "Nay, nay shut the book," she said. "We mun talk. I want t' know what thee wast cryin' about. Hast got troubles o' thy own, like other folks?"

On the other side of the wall there were the two brothers, so like each other in the midst of their unlikeness; Adam, with knit brows, shaggy hair, and dark vigorous color, absorbed in his "figuring;" Seth, with large rugged features, the close copy of his brother's, but with thin wavy brown hair and blue dreamy eyes, as often as not looking vaguely out of the window instead of at his book, although it was a newly-bought book—Wesley's abridgment of Madame Guyon's Life, which was full of wonder and interest for him. Seth had said to Adam, "Can I help thee with anything in here to-night? I don't want to make a noise in the shop."

"No, lad," Adam answered, "there's nothing but what I must do myself. Thee'st got thy new book to read."

And often, when Seth was quite unconscious, Adam, as he paused after drawing a line with his ruler, looked at his brother with a kind smile drawing in his eyes. He knew "th' lad liked to sit full o' thoughts he could give no account of; they'd never come t' anything, but they made him happy;" and in the last year or so, Adam had been getting more and more indulgent to Seth. It was part of that growing tenderness which came from the sorrow at work within him.

For Adam, though you see him quite master of himself, working hard and delighting in his work after his inborn inalienable nature, had not outlived his sorrow—had not felt it slip from him as a temporary burden, and leave him the same man again. Do any of us? God forbid. It would be a poor result of all our anguish and our wrestling, if we were nothing but our old selves at the end of it—if we could return to the same blind loves, the same self-confident blame, the same light thoughts of human suffering, the same frivolous gossip over blighted human lives, the same feeble sense of that Unknown toward which we have sent forth irrepressible cries in our loneliness. Let us rather be thankful that our sorrow lives in us as an indestructible force, only changing its form, as forces do, and passing from pain into sympathy—the one poor word which includes all our best insight and our best love. Not that this transformation of pain into sympathy had completely taken place in Adam yet; there was still a great remnant of pain, which he felt would subsist as long as *her* pain was not a memory, but an existing thing, which he must think of as renewed with the light of every new morning. But we get accustomed to mental as well as bodily pain, without, for all that, losing our sensibility to it; it becomes a habit of our lives, and we cease to imagine a condition of perfect ease as possible for us. Desire is chastened into submission; and we are contented with our day when we have been able to bear our grief in silence, and act as if we were not suffering. For it is at such periods that the sense of our lives having visible and invisible relations beyond any of which either our present or prospective self is the centre, grows like a muscle that we are obliged to lean on and exert.

That was Adam's state of mind in this second autumn of his sorrow. His work, as you know, had always been part of his religion, and from very early days he saw clearly that good carpentry was God's will—was that form of God's will that

most immediately concerned him ; but now there was no margin of dreams for him beyond this daylight reality, no holiday-time in the working-day world ; no moment in the distance when duty would take off her iron glove and breast-plate, and clasp him gently into rest. He conceived no picture of the future but one made up of hard working days such as he lived through, with growing contentment and intensity of interest, every fresh week ; love, he thought, could never be anything to him but a living memory—a limb lopped off, but not gone from consciousness. He did not know that the power of loving was all the while gaining new force within him ; that the new sensibilities bought by a deep experience were so many new fibres by which it was possible, nay, necessary to him, that his nature shall intertwine with another. Yet he was aware that common affection and friendship were more precious to him than they used to be—that he clung more to his mother and Seth, and had an unspeakable satisfaction in the sight or imagination of any small addition to her happiness. The Poyzers, too—hardly three or four days passed but he felt the need of seeing them, and interchanging words and looks of friendliness with them ; he would have felt this, probably, even if Dinah had not been with them ; but he had only said the simplest truth in telling Dinah that he put her above all other friends in the world. Could anything be more natural ? For in the darkest moments of memory the thought of her always came as the first ray of returning comfort ; the early days of gloom at Hall Farm had been gradually turned into soft moonlight in her presence ; and in the cottage, too—for she had come at every spare moment to soothe and cheer poor Lisbeth, who had been stricken with a fear that subdued even her querulousness, at the sight of her darling Adam's care-worn face. He had become used to watching her light, quiet movements, her pretty loving ways to the children, when he went to the Hall Farm ; to listen for her voice as for recurrent music ; to think everything she said and did was just right, and could not have been better. In spite of his wisdom, he could not find fault with her for her over-indulgence for the children, who had managed to convert Dinah the preacher, before whom a circle of rough men had often trembled a little, into a convenient household slave ; though Dinah herself was rather ashamed of this weakness, and had some inward conflict as to her departure from the precepts of Solomon. Yes, there was one thing that might have been better ; she might have loved Seth, and con-

sented to marry him. He felt a little vexed for his brother's sake ; and he could not help thinking regretfully how Dinah, as Seth's wife, could have made their home as happy as it could be for them all—how she was the one being that would have soothed their mother's last days into peacefulness and rest.

“ It's wonderful she doesn't love th' lad,” Adam had said sometimes to himself, “ for anybody 'ud think he was just cut out for her. But her heart's so taken up with other things. She's one o' those women that feel no drawing toward having a husband and children o' their own. She thinks she should be filled up with her own life then ; and she's been so used to living in other folks's cares, she can't bear the thoughts of her heart being shut up from 'em. I see how it is, well enough. She's cut out o' different stuff from most women ; I saw that long ago. She's never easy but when she's helping somebody, and marriage 'ud interfere with her ways—that' true. I've no right to be contriving and thinking it 'ud be better if she'd have Seth, as if I was wiser than she is—or than God either, for he made her what she is, and that's one o' the greatest blessings I've ever had from his hands, and other besides me.”

This self-reproof had recurred strangely to Adam's mind, when he gathered from Dinah's face that he had wounded her by referring to his wish that she had accepted Seth, and so he had endeavored to put into the strongest words his confidence in her decision as right—his resignation to her going away from them, and ceasing to make part of their life otherwise than by living in their thoughts, if that separation were chosen by herself. He felt sure she knew quite well enough how much he cared to see her continually—to talk to her with the silent consciousness of a mutual great remembrance. It was not possible she could hear anything but self-renouncing affection and respect in his assurance that he was contented for her to go away ; and yet there remained an uneasy feeling in his mind that he had not said quite the right thing—that, somehow, Dinah had not understood him.

Dinah must have risen a little before the sun the next morning, for she was down stairs about five o'clock. So was Seth ; for, through Lisbeth's obstinate refusal to have any woman-helper in this house, he had learned to make himself, as Adam said, “ very handy in the housework,” that he might save his mother from too great weariness ; on which ground I hope you will not think him unmanly, any more than you

can have thought the gallant Colonel Bath unmanly when he made the gruel for his invalid sister. Adam, who had sat up late at his writing, was still asleep, and was not likely, Seth said, to be down till breakfast-time. Often as Dinah had visited Lisbeth during the last eighteen months, she had never slept in the cottage since the night after Thias's death, when, you remember, Lisbeth praised her deft movements, and even gave a modified approval to her porridge. But in that long interval Dinah had made great advances in household cleverness; and this morning, since Seth was there to help, she was bent on bringing everything to a pitch of cleanliness and order that would have satisfied her aunt Poyser. The cottage was far from that standard at present, for Lisbeth's rheumatism had forced her to give up her old habits of dilettante scouring and polishing. When the house-place was to her mind, Dinah went into the new room, where Adam had been writing the night before, to see what sweeping and dusting were needed there. She opened the window and let in the fresh morning air, and the smell of the sweet-brier, and the bright low-slanting rays of the early sun, which made a glory about her pale face and pale auburn hair as she held the long brush, and swept, singing to herself in a very low tone—like a sweet summer murmur that you have to listen for very closely—one of Charles Wesley's hymns:

"Eternal Beam of Light Divine,
Fountain of unexhausted love,
In whom the Father's glories shine,
Through earth beneath and heaven above.

"Jesus! the weary wanderer's rest,
Give me thy easy yoke to bear;
With steadfast patience arm my breast
With spotless love and holy fear.

"Speak to my warring passions, 'Peace!'
Say to my trembling heart, 'Be still!'
Thy power my strength and fortress is,
For all things serve thy sovereign will."

She laid by the brush, and took up the duster; and if you had ever lived in Mrs. Poyser's household, you would know how the duster behaved in Dinah's hand—how it went into every small corner, and on every ledge in and out of sight—how it went again and again round every bar of the chairs, and every leg, and under and over everything that lay on the table, till it came to Adam's papers and rulers, and the open desk near them. Dinah dusted up the very edge of these, and then hesitated, looking at them with a longing but timid

eye. It was painful to see how much dust there was among them. As she was looking in this way, she heard Seth's step just outside the open door toward which her back was turned, and said, raising her clear treble,

"Seth," is your brother wrathful when his papers are stirred?"

"Yes, very, when they are not put back in the right places," said a deep strong voice, not Seth's.

It was as if Dinah had put her hands unawares on a vibrating chord; she was shaken with an intense thrill, and for the instant felt nothing else; then she knew her cheeks were glowing, and dared not look round, but stood still, distressed because she could not say good-morning in a friendly way. Adam, finding that she did not look round so as to the smile on his face, was afraid she had thought him serious about his wrathfulness, and went up to her, so that she was obliged to look at him.

"What! you think I'm a cross fellow at home, Dinah?" he said smilingly.

"Nay," said Dinah, looking up with timid eyes, "not so. But you might be put about by finding things meddled with; and even the man Moses, the meekest of men, was wrathful sometimes."

"Come, then," said Adam, looking at her affectionately, "I'll help you to move the things, and put 'em back again, and then they can't get wrong. You're getting to be your aunt's own niece, I see, for particularness."

They began their little task together, but Dinah had not recovered herself sufficiently to think of any remark, and Adam looked at her uneasily. Dinah, he thought, had seemed to disapprove him somehow lately; she had not been so kind and open to him as she used to be. He wanted her to look at him, and be as pleased as he was himself with doing this bit of playful work. But Dinah did not look at him; it was easy for her to avoid looking at the tall man; and when at last there was no more dusting to be done, and no farther excuse for him to linger near her, he could bear it no longer, and said, in rather a pleading tone,

"Dinah, you're not displeased with me for anything, are you? I've not said or done anything to make you think ill of me?"

The question surprised her, and relieved her by giving a new course to her feeling. She looked up at him now, quite earnestly, almost with the tears coming, and said,

"Oh no Adam! how could you think so?"

"I couldn't bear you not to feel as much a friend to me as I do to you," said Adam. "And you don't know the value I set on the very thought of you, Dinah. That was what I meant yesterday, when I said I'd be content for you to go, if you thought right. I meant, the thought of you was worth so much to me, I should feel I ought to be thankful, and not grumble, if you see right to go away. You know I do mind parting with you, Dinah?"

"Yes, dear friend," said Dinah, trembling, but trying to speak calmly, "I know you have a brother's heart toward me, and we shall often be with one another in spirit; but at this season I am in heaviness through manifold temptations: you must not mark me. I feel called to leave my kindred for a while; but it is a trial: the flesh is weak."

Adam saw that it pained her to be obliged to answer.

"I hurt you by talking about it, Dinah," he said: "I'll say no more. Let's see if Seth's ready with breakfast now."

That is a simple scene, reader. But it is almost certain that you, too, have been in love—perhaps, even, more than once, though you may not choose to say so to all your lady friends. If so you will no more think the slight words, the timid looks, the tremulous touches, by which two human souls approach each other gradually, like two quivering rain-streams, before they mingle into one—you will no more think these things trivial, than you will think the first-detected signs of coming spring trivial, though they be but a faint, indescribable something in the air and in the song of the birds, and the tiniest perceptible budding on the hedgerow branches. Those slight words and looks and touches are part of the soul's language; and the finest language, I believe, is chiefly made up of unimposing words, such as "light," "sound," "stars," "music"—words really not worth looking at, or hearing, in themselves, any more than "chips" or "sawdust;" it is only that they happen to be the signs of something unspeakably great and beautiful. I am of the opinion that love is a great and beautiful thing too; and if you agree with me, the smallest signs of it will not be chips and sawdust to you: they will rather be like those little words, "light" and "music," stirring the long-winding fibres of your memory, and enriching your present with your most precious past.

CHAPTER LI.

SUNDAY MORNING.

LISBETH'S touch of rheumatism could not be made to appear serious enough to detain Dinah another night from the Hall Farm, now she had made up her mind to leave her aunt so soon ; and at evening the friends must part. "For a long while," Dinah had said ; for she had told Lisbeth of her resolve.

"Then it'll be for all my life, an' I shall ne'er see thee again," said Lisbeth. "Long while! I'n got no long while t' live. An' I shall be took bad an' die, an' thee canst ne'er come a-nigh me, an' I shall die a-longing for thee."

That had been the key-note of her wailing talk all day ; for Adam was not in the house, and so she put no restraint on her complaining. She had tried poor Dinah by returning again and again to the question, why she must go away ? and refusing to accept reasons which seemed to her nothing but whim and "contrairiness ;" and still more, by regretting that she "couldna ha' one o' the lads," and be her daughter.

"Thee couldstna put up wi' Seth," she said ; "he isna cliver enough for thee, happen ; but he'd ha' been very good t' thee—he's as handy as can be at doin' things for me when I'm bad ; an he's as fond o' th' Bible an' chapelin' as thee a'thysen. But happen thee'dst like a husband better as isna just the cut o' thysen : th' runnin' brook insa athirst for th' rain. Adam 'ud ha' done for thee—I know he would ; an' he might come t' like thee well enough if thee'dst stop. But he's as stubborn as th' iron bar—there's no bendin' him no way but's own. But he'd be a fine husband for anybody, be they who they will, so looked-on an' so cliver as he is. And he'd be rare an' lovin' : it does me good, on'y a look o' the lad's eye, when he means kind tow'rt me."

Dinah tried to escape from Lisbeth's closest looks and questions by finding little tasks of housework that kept her moving about ; and as soon as Seth came home in the evening, she put on her bonnet to go. It touched Dinah keenly to say the last good-by, and still more to look round on her way across the fields, and see the old woman still standing at the door, gazing after her till she must have been the faintest speck in the dim aged eyes. "The God of love and peace be with

them," Dinah prayed, as she looked back from the last stile. "Make them glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted them, and the years wherein they have seen evil. It is thy will that I should part from them; let me have no will but thine."

Lisbeth turned into the house at last, and sat down in the workshop near Seth, who was busying himself there with fitting some bits of turned wood he had brought from the village into a small work-box which he meant to give to Dinah before she went away.

"Thee't see her again o' Sunday afore she goes," were her first words. "If thee wast good for anything, thee'dst make her come in again o' Sunday night wi' thee, an' see me once more."

"Nay, mother," said Seth, "Dinah 'ud be sure to come again if she saw right to come. I should have no need to persuade her. She only thinks it 'ud be troubling thee for nought just to come in to say good-by over again."

"She'd ne'er go away, I know, if Adam 'ud be fond on her an' marry her; but everything's so contrairy," said Lisbeth, with a burst of vexation.

Seth paused a moment, and looked up, with a slight blush, at his mother's face. "What! has she said anything o' that sort to thee, mother?" he said, in a low tone.

"Said! nay, she'll say nothin'. It's on'y the men as have to wait till folks say things afore they find 'em out."

"Well, but what makes thee think so, mother? What's put it into thy head?"

"It's no matter what's put it into my head: my head's none so hollow as it must get in, an' nought to put it there. I know she's fond on him, as I know the win's comin' in at th' door, an' that's anoof. An' he might be willin' to marry her if he know'd she's fond on him, but he'll ne'er think on't if somebody doesna put it into's head."

His mother's suggestion about Dinah's feeling toward Adam was not quite a new thought to Seth, but her last words alarmed him, lest she should herself undertake to open Adam's eyes. He was not sure about Dinah's feeling, and he thought he *was* sure about Adam's.

"Nay, mother, nay," he said, earnestly, "thee mustna think o' speaking o' such things to Adam. Thee'st no right to say what Dinah's feelings are if she hasna told thee; and it 'ud do nothing but mischief to say such things to Adam: he feels very grateful and affectionate toward Dinah, but he's no

thoughts toward her that 'ud incline him to make her his wife ; and I don't believe Dinah 'ud marry him either. I don't think she'll marry at all."

"Eh!" said Lisbeth, impatiently. "Thee think'st so 'cause she wouldna ha' thee. She'll ne'er marry thee ; thee might'st as well like her to ha' thy brother."

Seth was hurt. "Mother," he said, in a remonstrating tone, "don't think that of me. I should be as thankful t' have her for a sister as thee wouldst t' have her for a daughter. I've no more thoughts about myself in that thing, and I shall take it hard if ever thee say'st it again."

"Well, well, then thee shouldstna cross me wi' sayin' things arena as I say they are."

"But, mother," said Seth, "thee'dst be doing Dinah a wrong by telling Adam what thee think'st about her. It 'ud do nothing but mischief ; for it 'ud make Adam uneasy if he doesna feel the same to her. And I'm pretty sure he feels nothing o' the sort."

"Eh! donna tell me what thee't sure on ; thee know'st nought about it. What's he allays goin' to the Poyzers for, if he didna wantt' see her? He goes twice where he used t' go once. Happen he knowsna as he wants t' see her ; he knowsna as I put salt in's broth, but he'd miss it pretty quick if it warna there. He'll ne'er think o' marr'in' if it isna put into's head ; an' if thee'dst any love for thy mother, thee'dst put him up to 't, an' not let her go away out o' my sight, when I might ha' her to make a bit o' comfort for me afore I go to bed to my old man under the white thorn."

"Nay, mother," said Seth, "thee mustna think me unkind ; but I should be going against my conscience if I took upon me to say what Dinah's feelings are. And besides that, I think I should give offence to Adam by speaking to him at all about marrying ; and I counsel thee not to do't. Thee may'st be quite deceived about Dinah ; nay, I'm pretty sure, by words she said to me last Sabbath, as she's no mind to marry."

"Thee't as contrairy as the rest on 'em. If it war summat I didna want it 'ud be done fast enough."

Lisbeth rose from the bench at this, and went out of the workshop, leaving Seth in much anxiety lest she should disturb Adam's mind about Dinah. He consoled himself after a time with reflecting that, since Adam's trouble, Lisbeth had been very timid about speaking to him on matters of feeling, and that she would hardly dare to approach this tenderest of

all subjects. Even if she did, he hoped Adam would not take much notice of what she said.

Seth was right in believing that Lisbeth would be held in restraint by timidity ; and during the next three days the intervals in which she had an opportunity of speaking to Adam were too rare and short to cause her any strong temptation. But in her long solitary hours she brooded over her regretful thoughts about Dinah, till they had grown very near that point of unmanageable strength when thoughts are apt to take wing out of their secret nest in a startling manner. And on Sunday morning, when Seth went away to chapel at Treddleston, the dangerous opportunity came.

Sunday morning was the happiest time in all the week to Lisbeth ; for as there was no service at Hayslope church till the afternoon, Adam was always at home, doing nothing but reading, an occupation in which she could venture to interrupt him. Moreover, she had always a better dinner than usual to prepare for her sons—very frequently for Adam and herself alone, Seth being often away the entire day ; and the smell of the roast-meat before the clear fire in the clean kitchen, the clock ticking in a peaceful Sunday manner, her darling Adam seated near her in his best clothes, doing nothing very important, so that she could go and stroke her hand across his hair if she liked, and see him look up at her and smile, while Gyp, rather jealous, poked his muzzle up between them—all these things made poor Lisbeth's earthly paradise.

The book Adam most often read on a Sunday morning was his large pictured Bible, and this morning it lay open before him on the round white deal table in the kitchen ; for he sat there in spite of the fire, because he knew his mother liked to have him with her, and it was the only day in the week when he could indulge her in that way. You would have liked to see Adam reading his Bible ; he never opened it on a week-day, and so he came to it as a holiday book, serving him for history, biography, and poetry. He had one hand thrust between his waistcoat buttons and the other ready to turn the pages ; and in the course of the morning you would have seen many changes in his face. Sometimes his lips moved in semi-articulation—it was when he came to a speech that he could fancy himself uttering, such as Samuel's dying speech to the people ; then his eyebrows would be raised, and the corners of his mouth would quiver a little with sad sympathy — something, perhaps old Isaac's meeting with

his son, touched him closely ; at other times, over the New Testament, a very solemn look would come upon his face, and he would every now and then shake his head in serious assent, or just lift up his hand and let it fall again ; and, on some mornings, when he read in the Apocrypha, of which he was very fond, the son of Syrach's keen-edged words would bring a delighted smile, though he also enjoyed the freedom of occasionally differing from an Apocryphal writer. For Adam knew the Articles quite well, as became a good churchman.

Lisbeth, in the pauses of attending to her dinner, always sat opposite to him and watched him, till she could rest no longer without going up to him and giving him a caress, to call his attention to her. This morning he was reading the gospel according to St. Matthew, and Lisbeth had been standing close by him for some minutes, stroking his hair, which was smoother than usual this morning, and looking down at the large page with silent wonderment at the mystery of letters. She was encouraged to continue this caress, because when she first went up to him, he had thrown himself back in his chair to look at her affectionately and say, "Why, mother, thee look'st rare and hearty this morning. Eh ! Gyp wants me t' look at him ; he can't abide to think I love thee the best." Lisbeth said nothing because she wanted to say so many things. And now there was a new leaf to be turned over, and it was a picture—that of the angel seated on the great stone that has been rolled away from the sepulchre. This picture had one strong association in Lisbeth's memory, for she had been reminded of it when she first saw Dinah ; and Adam had no sooner turned the page and lifted the book sideways that they might look at the angel, than she said, "That's her—that's Dinah."

Adam smiled, and looking more intently at the angel's face, said,

"It *is* a bit like her ; but Dinah's prettier, I think."

"Well, then, if thee think'st her so pretty, why ain't fond on her?"

Adam looked up in surprise. "Why, mother, dost think I don't set store by Dinah?"

"Nay," said Lisbeth, frightened at her own courage, yet, feeling that she had broken the ice, and the water must flow whatever mischief they might do. "What's th' use o' settin' store by things as are thirty mile off? If thee wast fond enough on her, thee wouldstna let her go away?"

"But I've no right t' hinder her, if she thinks well," said Adam, looking at his book as if he wanted to go on reading.

He foresaw a series of complaints, tending to nothing. Lisbeth sat down again in the chair opposite to him, as she said,

"But she wouldna think well, if thee wastna so contrary." Lisbeth dared not venture beyond a vague phrase yet.

"Contrairy, mother?" Adam said, looking up again in some anxiety. "What have I done? What dost mean?"

"Why, thee't never look at nothin', nor think o' nothin', but thy figurin' an' thy work," said Lisbeth, half crying. "An' dost think thee canst go on so all thy life, as if thee wast a man cut out o' timber? An' what wut do when thy mother's gone, an' nobody to take care on thee as thee gett'st a bit o' victual comfortable i' the mornin'?"

"What hast got i' thy mind, mother?" said Adam, vexed at this whimpering. "I canna see what thee't driving at. Is there anything I could do for thee as I don't do?"

"Ay, an' that there is. Thee might'st do so as I should ha' somebody wi' me to comfort me a bit, an' wait on me when I'm bad, an' be good to me."

"Well, mother, whose fault is it there isna some tidy body i' th' house t' help thee? It isna by my wish as thee hast a stroke o' work to do. We can afford it—I've told thee often enough, It 'ud be a deal better for us."

"Eh! what's th' use o' talkin' o' tidy bodies, when thee mean'st one o' th' wenches out o' th' village, or somebody from Treddles'on as I ne'er set eyes on i' my life? I'd sooner make a shift an' get into my coffin afore I die, nor ha' them folks to put me in."

Adam was silent, and tried to go on reading. That was the utmost severity he could show toward his mother on a Sunday morning. But Lisbeth had gone too far now to check herself, and after scarcely a minute's quietness she began again.

"Thee might'st know well enough who 'tis I'd like t' ha' wi' me. It isna many folks I send for t' come an' see me, I reckon. An' thee'st had the fetchin' on her times anoo."

"Thee mean'st Dinah, mother, I know," said Adam. "But it's no use setting thy mind on what can't be. If Dinah 'ud be willing to stay at Hayslope, it isn't likely she can come away from her aunt's house, where they hold her like a daughter, and where she's more bound than she is to us. If it had been so that she could ha' married Seth, that 'ud ha' been a great blessing to us, but we can't have things just as we

like in this life. Thee must try and make up thy mind to do without her."

"Nay, but I canna ma' up my mind, when she's just cut out for thee; an' nought shall ma' me believe as God didna make her an' send her there o' purpose for thee. What's it sinnify about her bein' a Methody? It 'ud happen wear out on her wi' marryin'."

Adam threw himself back in his chair and looked at his mother. He understood now what she had been aiming at from the beginning of the conversation. It was as unreasonable, impracticable a wish as she had ever urged, but he could not help being moved by so entirely new an idea. The chief point, however, was to chase away the notion from his mother's mind as quickly as possible.

"Mother," he said, gravely, "thee't talking wild. Don't let me hear thee say such things again. It's no good talking o' what can never be. Dinah's not for marrying; she's fixed her heart on a different sort o' life."

"Very like," said Lisbeth, impatiently, "very like she's none for marr'ing, when them as she'd be willin' t' marry wonna ax her. I shouldna ha' been for marr'ing thy feyther if he'd ne'er axed me; an' she's as fond o' thee as e'er I war o' 'Thias, poor fellow."

The blood rushed to Adam's face, and for a few moments he was not quite conscious where he was; his mother and the kitchen had vanished for him, and he saw nothing but Dinah's face turned up toward his. It seemed as if there were a resurrection of his dead joy. But he woke up very speedily from that dream (the waking was chill and sad); for it would have been very foolish in him to believe his mother's words: she could have no ground for them. He was prompted to express his disbelief very strongly—perhaps that he might call forth the proofs, if there were any to be offered.

"What dost say such things for, mother, when thee'st got no foundation for 'em? Thee know'st nothing as gives thee a right to say that."

"Then I knowna nought as gi'es me a right to say as th' year's turned, for all I feel't fust thing when I get up i' th' mornin'. She isna fond o' Seth, I reckon, is she? She doesna want t' marry *him*? But I can see as she doesna behave tow'rt thee as she does tow'rt Seth. She makes no more o' Seth's comin' a-nigh her nor if he war Gyp, but she's all of a tremble when thee't a-sittin' down by her at breakfast, an' a-lookin' at her. Thee think'st thy mother knows nought, but she war alive afore thee wast born."

"But thee canstna be sure as the trembling means love?" said Adam, anxiously.

"Eh! what else should it mane? It isna hate, I reckon. An' what should she do but love thee? Thee't made to be loved—for where's there a straighter, cliverer man? An' what's it sinnify her bein' a Methody? It's on'y th' marigold i' th' parridge."

Adam had thrust his hands in his pockets, and was looking down at the book on the table, without seeing any of the letters. He was trembling like a gold-seeker, who sees the strong promise of gold, but sees in the same moment a sickening vision of disappointment. He could not trust his mother's insight; she had seen what she wished to see. And yet—and yet, now the suggestion had been made to him, he remembered so many things, very slight things, like the stirring of the water by an imperceptible breeze, which seemed to him some confirmation of his mother's words.

Lisbeth noticed that he was moved. She went on.

"An' thee't find out as thee't poorly aff when she's gone. Thee't fonder on her nor thee know'st. Thy eyes follow her about weliy as Gyp's follow thee."

Adam could sit still no longer. He rose, took down his hat, and went out into the fields.

The sunshine was on them: that early autumn sunshine which we should know was not summer's, even if there were not the touches of yellow on the lime and chestnut; the Sunday sunshine, too, which has more than autumnal calmness for the working man: the morning sunshine, which still leaves the dew-crystals on the fine gossamer webs in the shadow of the bushy hedgerows.

Adam needed the calm influence; he was amazed at the way in which this new thought of Dinah's love had taken possession of him, with an overmastering power that made all other feelings give way before the impetuous desire to know that the thought was true. Strange, that till that moment the possibility of their ever being lovers had never crossed his mind, and yet now all his longing suddenly went out toward that possibility; he had no more doubt or hesitation as to his own wishes than the bird that flies toward the opening through which the daylight gleams and the breath of heaven enters.

The autumnal Sunday sunshine soothed him; but not by preparing him with resignation to the disappointment if his mother—if he himself, proved to be mistaken about Dinah; it

soothed him by gentle encouragement of his hopes. Her love was so like that calm sunshine that they seemed to make one presence to him, and he believed in them both alike. And Dinah was so bound up with the sad memories of his first passion, that he was not forsaking them, but rather giving them a new sacredness by loving her. Nay, his love for her had grown out of that best; it was the noon of that morning.

But Seth? Would the lad be hurt? Hardly; for he had seemed quite contented of late, and there was no selfish jealousy in him; he had never been jealous of his mother's fondness for Adam. But had *he* seen anything of what their mother talked about? Adam longed to know this, for he thought he could trust Seth's observation better than his mother's. He must talk to Seth before he went to see Dinah; and, with this intention in his mind, he walked back to the cottage and said to his mother:

"Did Seth say anything to thee about when he was coming home? Will he be back to dinner?"

"Ay, lad; he'll be back, for a wonder. He isn't gone to Treddles'on. He's gone somewhere else a-preachin' an' a-prayin'."

"Hast any notion which way he's gone?" said Adam.

"Nay, but he often goes to th' Common. Thee know'st more o's goings nor I do."

Adam wanted to go and meet Seth, but he must content himself with walking about the near fields and getting sight of him as soon as possible. That would not be for more than an hour to come, for Seth would scarcely be at home much before their dinner-time, which was twelve o'clock. But Adam could not sit down to his reading again, and he sauntered along by the brook and stood leaning against the stiles, with eager, intense eyes, which looked as if they saw something very vividly; but it was not the brook or the willows, not the fields or the sky. Again and again his vision was interrupted by wonder at the strength of his own feeling, at the strength and sweetness of this new love—almost like the wonder man feels at the added power he finds in himself for an art which he had laid aside for a space. How is it that the poets have said so many fine things about our first love, so few about our later love? Are their first poems the best? or are not those the best which come from their fuller thought, their larger experience, their deeper-rooted affections? The boy's flute-like voice has its own spring charm; but the man should yield a richer, deeper music.

At last, there was Seth, visible at the farthest stile, and Adam hastened to meet him. Seth was surprised, and thought something unusual must have happened; but when Adam came up, his face said plainly enough that it was nothing alarming.

"Where hast been?" said Adam, when they were side by side.

"I've been to th' Common," said Seth. "Dinah's been speaking the Word to a little company of hearers at Brimstone's, as they call him. They're folks as never go to church hardly—them on the Common—but they'll go and hear Dinah a bit. She's been speaking with power this forenoon from the words 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' And there was a little thing happened as was pretty to see. The women mostly bring their children with 'em, but to-day there was one stout, curly-headed fellow, about three or four year old, that I never saw there before. He was as naughty as could be at the beginning, while I was praying, and while we was singing, but when we all sat down and Dinah began to speak, th' young un stood stock still all at once, and began to look at her with's mouth open, and presently he ran away from's mother and went up to Dinah, and pulled at her like a little dog, for her to take notice of him. So Dinah lifted him up and held th' lad on her lap, while she went on speaking; and he was as good as could be till he went t' sleep—and the mother cried to see him."

"It's a pity she shouldna be a mother herself," said Adam, "so fond as the children are of her. Dost think she's quite fixed against marrying, Seth? Dost think nothing 'ud turn her?"

There was something peculiar in his brother's tone, which made Seth steal a glance at his face before he answered.

"It 'ud be wrong of me to say nothing 'ud turn her," he answered. "But if thee mean'st it about myself, I've given up all thoughts as she can ever be *my* wife. She calls me her brother, and that's enough."

"But dost think she might ever get fond enough of anybody else to be willing to marry 'em?" said Adam, rather shyly.

"Well," said Seth, after some hesitation, "it's crossed my mind sometimes o' late as she might; but Dinah 'ud let no fondness for the creature draw her out o' the path as she believed God had marked out for her. If she thought the leading was not from Him, she's not one to be brought under the

power of it. And she's allays seemed clear about that, as her work was to minister t' others, and make no home for herself i' this world."

"But suppose," said Adam, earnestly, "suppose there was a man as 'ud let her do just the same and not interfere with her—she might do a good deal o' what she does now just as well when she was married as when she was single. Other women of her sort have married—that's to say, not just like her, but women as preached and attended on the sick and needy. There's Mrs. Fletcher as she talks of."

A new light had broken in on Seth. He turned round, and laying his hand on Adam's shoulder, said, "Why, wouldst like her to marry *thee*, brother?"

Adam looked doubtfully at Seth's inquiring eyes, and said, "Wouldst be hurt if she was to be fonder o' me than o' thee?"

"Nay," said Seth, warmly, "how canst think it? Have I felt thy trouble so little that I shouldna feel thy joy?"

There was silence a few moments as they walked on, and then Seth said,

"I'd no notion as thee'dst ever think of her for a wife."

"But is it o' any use to think of her?" said Adam; "what dost say? Mother's made me as I hardly know where I am, with what she's been saying to me this forenoon. She says she's sure Dinah feels for me more than common, and 'ud be willing t' have me. But I'm afraid she speaks without book. I want to know if thee'st seen anything?"

"It's a nice point to speak about," said Seth, "and I'm afraid o' being wrong; besides, we've no right to intermeddle with people's feelings when they wouldn't tell 'em themselves."

Seth paused.

"But thee might'st ask her," he said presently. "She took no offense at *me* for asking; and thee'st more right than I had, only thee't not in the society. But Dinah doesn't hold wi' them as are for keeping the society so strict to themselves. She doesn't mind about making folks enter the society, so as they're fit t' enter the kingdom o' God. Some o' the brethren at Treddles'on are displeased with her for that."

"Where will she be the rest o' the day?" said Adam.

"She said she shouldn't leave the farm again to-day," said Seth, "because it's her last Sabbath there, and she's going t' read out o' the big Bible wi' the children."

Adam thought—but did not say—"Then I'll go this afternoon; for if I go to church, my thoughts 'ull be with her all the while. They must sing th' anthem without me to-day."

CHAPTER LII.

ADAM AND DINAH.

It was about three o'clock when Adam entered the farmyard, and roused Alick and the dogs from their Sunday dozing. Alick said everybody was gone to church but "th' young missis"—so he called Dinah; but this did not disappoint Adam, although the "everybody" was so liberal as to include Nancy, the dairymaid, whose works of necessity were not unfrequently incompatible with church-going.

There was perfect stillness about the house; the doors were all closed, and the very stones and tubs seemed quieter than usual. Adam heard the water gently dripping from the pump—that was the only sound; and he knocked at the house door rather softly, as was suitable in that stillness.

The door opened, and Dinah stood before him, coloring deeply with the great surprise of seeing Adam at this hour, when she knew it was his regular practice to be at church. Yesterday he would have said to her without any difficulty, "I came to see you, Dinah: I knew the rest were not at home." But to-day something prevented him from saying that, and he put out his hand to her in silence. Neither of them spoke, and yet both wished they could speak, as Adam entered, and they sat down. Dinah took the chair she had just left; it was at the corner of the table near the window, and there was a book lying on the table, but it was not open; she had been sitting perfectly still, looking at the small bit of fire in the bright grate. Adam sat down opposite her in Mr. Poyser's three-cornered chair.

"Your mother is not ill again, I hope, Adam," Dinah remarked, recovering herself. "Seth said she was well this morning."

"No, she's very hearty to-day," said Adam, happy in the signs of Dinah's feeling at the sight of him, but shy.

"There's nobody at home, you see," Dinah said; "but you'll wait. You've been hindered from going to church to-day, doubtless."

"Yes," Adam said, and then paused, before he added, "I was thinking about you; that was the reason."

This confession was very awkward and sudden, Adam felt, for he thought Dinah must understand all he meant. But the frankness of the words caused her immediately to interpret them into a renewal of his brotherly regrets that she was going away, and she answered calmly,

"Do not be careful and troubled for me, Adam. I have all things and abound at Snowfield. And my mind is at rest, for I am not seeking my own will in going."

"But if things were different, Dinah," said Adam, hesitatingly—"if you knew things that perhaps you don't know now"

Dinah looked at him inquiringly, but instead of going on, he reached a chair and brought it near the corner of the table where she was sitting. She wondered, and was afraid—and the next moment her thoughts flew to the past; was it something about those distant unhappy ones that she didn't know?

Adam looked at her; it was so sweet to look at her eyes, which had now a self-forgetful questioning in them—for a moment he forgot that he wanted to say anything, or that it was necessary to tell her what he meant.

"Dinah," he said suddenly, taking both her hands between his, "I love you with my whole heart and soul. I love you next to God who made me."

Dinah's lips became pale, like her cheeks, and she trembled violently under the shock of painful joy. Her hands were cold as death between Adam's. She could not draw them away, because he held them fast.

"Don't tell me you can't love me, Dinah. Don't tell me we must part, and pass our lives away from one another."

The tears were trembling in Dinah's eyes, and they fell before she could answer. But she spoke in a quiet, low voice.

"Yes, dear Adam, we must submit to another Will. We must part."

"Not if you love me, Dinah—not if you love me," Adam said, passionately. "Tell me—tell me if you can love me better than a brother."

Dinah was too entirely reliant on the Divine will to attempt to achieve any end by a deceptive concealment. She was recovering now from the first shock of emotion, and she looked at Adam with simple sincere eyes as she said,

"Yes Adam, my heart is drawn strongly toward you; and of my own will, if I had no clear showing to the contrary, I could find my happiness in being near you, and ministering to you continually. I fear I should forget to rejoice and weep

with others ; nay, I fear I should forget the Divine presence, and seek no love but yours."

Adam did not speak immediately. They sat looking at each other in delicious silence — for the first sense of mutual love excludes other feelings ; it will have the soul all to itself.

"Then, Dinah," Adam said at last, "how can there be any thing contrary to what's right in our belonging to one another and spending our lives together? Who put this great love into our hearts? Can anything be holier than that? For we can ask God to be with us continually, and we'll help one another in everything as is good. I'd never think o' putting myself between you and God, and saying you oughtn't to do this, and you oughtn't to do that. You'd follow your conscience as much as you do now."

"Yes, Adam," Dinah said, "I know marriage is a holy state for those who are truly called to it, and have no other drawing ; but from my childhood upward I have been led toward another path ; all my peace and my joy have come from having no life of my own, no wants, no wishes for myself, and living only in God and those of his creatures whose sorrows and joys he has given me to know. Those have been very blessed years to me, and I feel that, if I was to listen to any voice that would draw me aside from that path, I should be turning my back on the light that has shone upon me, and darkness and doubt would take hold of me. We could not bless each other, Adam, if there were doubts in my soul, and if I yearned, when it was too late, after that better part which had once been given me and I had put away from me."

"But if a new feeling has come into your mind, Dinah, and if you love me so as to be willing to be nearer to me than to other people, isn't that a sign that it's right for you to change your life? Doesn't the love make it right when nothing else would?"

"Adam, my mind is full of questionings about that ; for now, since you tell me of your strong love toward me, what was clear to me has become dark again. I felt before that my heart was too strongly drawn toward you, and that your heart was not as mine ; and the thought of you had taken hold of me, so that my soul had lost its freedom, and was becoming enslaved to an earthly affection, which made me anxious and careful about what should befall myself. For in all other affection I had been content with any small return, or with none ; but my heart was beginning to hunger after an equal love from you. And I had no doubt that I must wrestle

against that as a great temptation ; and the command was clear that I must go away."

"But now, dear, dear Dinah, now you know I love you better than you love me it's all different now. You won't think o' going ; you'll stay, and be my dear wife, and I shall thank God for giving me life as I never thanked him before."

"Adam, it's hard to me to turn a deaf ear. . . . you know it's hard ; but a great fear is upon me. It seems to me as if you were stretching out your arms to me, and beckoning me to come and take my ease, and live for my own delight, and Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, was standing looking toward me, and pointing to the sinful, and suffering, and afflicted. I have seen that again and again when I have been sitting in stillness and darkness, and great terror has come upon me lest I should become hard, and a lover of self, and no more bear willingly the Redeemer's cross."

Dinah had closed her eyes, and a faint shudder went through her. "Adam," she went on, "you wouldn't desire that we should seek a good through any unfaithfulness to the light that is in us ; you wouldn't believe that could be a good. We are of one mind in that."

"Yes, Dinah," said Adam, sadly, "I'll never be the man t' urge you against your conscience. But I can't give up the hope that you may come to see different. I don't believe your loving me could shut up your heart ; it's only adding to what you've been before, not taking away from it ; for it seems to me it's the same with love and happiness as with sorrow—the more we know of it the better we can feel what other people's lives are or might be, and so we shall only be more tender to 'em, and wishful to help 'em. The more knowledge a man has the better he'll do's work ; and feeling's a sort o' knowledge."

Dinah was silent ; her eyes were fixed in contemplation of something visible only to herself. Adam went on presently with his pleading :

"And you can do almost as much as you do now. I won't ask you to go to church with me of a Sunday, you shall go where you like among the people, and teach 'em ; for though I like church best, I don't put my soul above yours, as if my words was better for you t' follow than your own conscience. And you can help the sick just as much, and you'll have more means o' making 'em a bit comfortable ; and you'll be among all your own friends as love you, and can help 'em, and be a

blessing to 'em, till their dying day. Surely, Dinah, you'd be as near to God as if you were living lonely and away from me."

Dinah made no answer for some time. Adam was still holding her hands, and looking at her with almost trembling anxiety, when she turned her grave, loving eyes on his, and said in rather a sad voice,

"Adam, there is truth in what you say, and there's many of God's servants who have greater strength than I have, and find their hearts enlarged by the cares of husband and kindred. But I have not faith that it would be so with me, for since my affections have been set above measure on you, I have had less peace and joy in God; I have felt as it were a division in my heart. And think how it is with me, Adam: that life I have led is like a land I have trodden in blessedness since my childhood; and if I long for a moment to follow the voice which calls me to another land that I know not, I cannot but fear that my soul might hereafter yearn for that early blessedness which I had forsaken: and where doubt enters, there is not perfect love. I must wait for clearer guidance: I must go from you, and we must submit ourselves entirely to the Divine will. We are sometimes required to lay our natural, lawful affections on the altar."

Adam dared not plead again, for Dinah's was not the voice of caprice or insincerity. But it was very hard for him; his eyes got dim as he looked at her.

"But you may come to feel satisfied . . . to feel that you may come to me again, and we may never part, Dinah?"

"We must submit ourselves, Adam. With time, our duty will be made clear. It may be, when I have entered on my former life, I shall find all these new thoughts and wishes vanish, and become as things that were not. Then I shall know that my calling is not toward marriage. But we must wait."

"Dinah," said Adam, mournfully, "you can't love me so well as I love you, else you'd have no doubts. But it's natural you shouldn't, for I'm not so good as you. I can't doubt it's right for me to love the best thing God's ever given me to know."

"Nay, Adam; it seems to me that my love for you is not weak; for my heart waits on your words and looks, almost as a little child waits on the help and tenderness of the strong on whom it depends. If the thought of you took slight hold of me, I should not fear that it would be an idol in the temple.

But you will strengthen me—you will not hinder me in seeking to obey to the uttermost.”

“Let us go out into the sunshine, Dinah, and walk together. I’ll speak no word to disturb you.”

They went out, and walked toward the fields, where they would meet the family coming from the church. Adam said, “Take my arm, Dinah,” and she took it. That was the only change in their manner to each other since they were last walking together. But no sadness in the prospect of her going away—in the uncertainty of the issue—could rob the sweetness from Adam’s sense that Dinah loved him. He thought he would stay at the Hall Farm all that evening. He would be near her as long as he could.

“Heyday! there’s Adam along wi’ Dinah,” said Mr. Poyser, as he opened the far gate into the Home Close. “I couldna think how he happened away from church. Why,” added good Martin, after a moment’s pause, “what dost think has just jumped into my head?”

“Summat as hadna far to jump, for it’s just under our nose. You mean as Adam’s fond o’ Dinah.”

“Ay! hast ever had any notion of it before?”

“To be sure I have,” said Mrs. Poyser, who always declined, if possible, to be taken by surprise. “I’m not one o’ those as can see the cat i’ the dairy, an’ wonder what she’s come after.”

“Thee never saidst a word to me about it.”

“Well, I aren’t like a bird-clapper, forced to make a rattle when the wind blows on me. I can keep my own counsel when there’s no good i’ speaking.”

“But Dinah’ll ha’ none o’ him: dost think she will?”

“Nay,” said Mrs. Poyser, not sufficiently on her guard against a possible surprise; “she’ll never marry anybody if he isn’t a Methodist and a cripple.”

“It ’ud ha’ been a pretty thing, though, for ’em t’ marry,” said Martin, turning his head on one side, as if in pleased contemplation of his new idea. “Thee’dst ha’ liked it too, wouldstna?”

“Ah! I should. I should ha’ been sure of her then, as she wouldn’t go away from me to Snowfield, welly thirty mile off, and me not got a creature to look to, only neighbors, as are no kin to me, an’ most of ’em women as I’d be ashamed to show my face if *my* dairy things war like their’n. There may well be streaky butter i’ the market. An’ I should be glad to see the poor thing settled like a Christian woman,

with a house of her own over her head; and we'd stock her well wi' linen and feathers, for I love her next to my own children. An' she makes one feel safer when she's i' th' house, for she's like the driven snow: anybody might sin for two as had her at their elbow."

"Dinah," said Tommy, running forward to meet her, "mother says you'll never marry anybody but a Methodist cripple. What a silly you must be!" a comment which Tommy followed up by seizing Dinah with both arms, and dancing along by her side with incommensurable fondness.

"Why, Adam, we missed you i' the singing to-day," said Mr. Poyser. "How was it?"

"I wanted to see Dinah: she's going away so soon," said Adam.

"Ah, lad! can you persuade her to stop somehow? Find her a good husband somewhere i' the parish. If you'll do that, we'll forgive you for missing church. But, any way, she isna going before the harvest-supper o' Wednesday, and you must come then. There's Bartle Massey comin,' an' happen Craig. You'll be sure an' come, now, at seven? The missis wonno have it a bit later."

"Ay," said Adam, "I'll come, if I can. But I can't often say what I'll do beforehand, for the work often holds me longer than I expect. You'll stay till th' end o' the week, Dinah?"

"Yes, yes!" said Mr. Poyser; "we'll have no nay."

"She's no call to be in a hurry," observed Mrs. Poyser. "Scarceness o' victual 'ull keep; there's no need to be hasty wi' the cooking. An' scarceness is what there's the biggest stock of i' that country."

Dinah smiled, but gave no promise to stay, and they talked on other things through the rest of the walk, lingering in the sunshine to look at the great flock of geese grazing, at the new corn-ricks, and at the surprising abundance of fruit on the old pear-tree; Nancy and Molly having already hastened home, side by side, each holding, carefully wrapped in her pocket-handkerchief, a prayer-book, in which she could read little beyond the large letters and the Amens.

Surely all other leisure is hurry compared with a sunny walk through the fields from "afternoon church"—as such walks used to be in those old leisurely times, when the boat, gliding sleepily along the canal, was the newest locomotive wonder; when Sunday books had most of them old brown leather covers, and opened with remarkable precision always

in one place. Leisure is gone—gone where the spinning-wheels are gone, and the pack-horses, and the slow wagons, and the pedlers who brought bargains to the door on sunny afternoons. Ingenious philosophers tell you, perhaps, that the great work of the steam-engine is to create leisure for mankind. Do not believe them ; it only creates a vacuum for eager thought to rush in. Even idleness is eager for amusement ; prone to excursion-trains, art museums, periodical literature, and exciting novels ; prone even to scientific theorizing, and cursory peeps through microscopes. Old Leisure was quite a different personage ; he only read one newspaper, innocent of leaders, and was free from that periodicity of sensations which we call post-time. He was a contemplative, rather stout gentleman, of excellent digestion—of quiet perceptions, undiseased by hypothesis ; happy in his inability to know the causes of things, preferring the things themselves. He lived chiefly in the country, among pleasant seats and homesteads, and was fond of sauntering by the fruit-tree wall, and scenting the apricots when they were warmed by the morning sunshine, or of sheltering himself under the orchard boughs at noon, when the summer pears were falling. He knew nothing of week-day services, and thought none the worse of the Sunday sermon if it allowed him to sleep from the text to the blessing—liking the afternoon service best, because the prayers were the shortest, and not ashamed to say so ; for he had an easy, jolly conscience, broad-backed like himself, and able to carry a great deal of beer or port wine—not being made squeamish by doubts and qualms and lofty aspirations. Life was not a task to him, but a sinecure ; he fingered the guineas in his pocket, and ate his dinners, and slept the sleep of the irresponsible ; for had he not kept up his charter by going to church on the Sunday afternoon ?

Fine old Leisure ! Do not be severe upon him, and judge him by our modern standard ; he never went to Exeter Hall, or heard a popular preacher, or read *Tracts for the Times*, or *Sartor Resartus*.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE HARVEST SUPPER.

As Adam was going homeward, on Wednesday evening, in the six o'clock sunlight, he saw in the distance the last load of barley winding its way toward the yard gate of the Hall Farm, and heard the chant of "Harvest Home!" rising and sinking like a wave. Fainter and fainter, and more musical through the growing distance, the falling, dying sound still reached him, as he neared the Willow Brook. The low westering sun shone right on the shoulders of the old Binton Hills, turning the unconscious sheep into bright spots of light; shone on the windows of the cottage, too, and made them a-flame with a glory beyond that of amber or amethyst. It was enough to make Adam feel that he was in a great temple, and that the distant chant was a sacred song.

"It's wonderful," he thought, "how that sound goes to one's heart almost like a funeral bell, for all it tells one o' the joyfulest time o' the year, and the time when men are mostly the thankfullest. I suppose it's a bit hard to us to think anything's over and gone in our lives; and there's a parting at the root of all our joys. It's like what I feel about Dinah; I should never ha' come to know that her love 'ud be the greatest of blessings to me, if what I counted a blessing hadn't been wrenched and torn away from me, and left me with a greater need, so as I could crave and hunger for a greater and a better comfort."

He expected to see Dinah again this evening, and get leave to accompany her as far as Oakbourne; and then he would ask her to fix some time when he might go to Snowfield, and learn whether the last best hope that had been born to him must be resigned like the rest. The work he had to do at home, besides putting on his best clothes, made it seven before he was on his way again to the Hall Farm, and it was questionable whether, with his longest and quickest strides, he should be there in time even for the roast beef which came after the plum-pudding; for Mrs. Poyser's supper would be punctual.

Great was the clatter of knives and pewter plates and tin cans when Adam entered the house-place, but there was no

hum of voices to this accompaniment; the eating of excellent roast beef, provided free of expense, was too serious a business to those good farm-laborers to be performed with a divided attention, even if they had had anything to say to each other—which they had not; and Mr. Poyser, at the head of the table, was too busy with his carving to listen to Bartle Massey's or Mr. Craig's ready talk.

"Here, Adam," said Mrs. Poyser, who was standing and looking on to see that Molly and Nancy did their duty as waiters, "here's a place kept for you between Mr. Massey and the boys. It's a poor tale you couldn't come to see the pudding when it was whole."

Adam looked anxiously round for a fourth woman's figure; but Dinah was not there. He was almost afraid of asking about her; besides, his attention was claimed by greetings, and there remained the hope that Dinah was in the house, though perhaps disinclined to festivities on the eve of her departure.

It was a goodly sight—that table, with Martin Poyser's round, good-humored face and large person at the head of it, helping his servants to the fragrant roast beef, and pleased when the empty plates came again. Martin, though usually blest with a good appetite, really forgot to finish his own beef to-night—it was so pleasant to him to look on in the intervals of carving, and see how the others enjoyed their supper; for were they not men who, on all the days of the year except Christmas-day and Sundays, ate their cold dinner, in a make-shift manner, under the hedgerows, and drank their beer out of wooden bottles—with relish certainly, but with their mouths toward the zenith, after a fashion more endurable to ducks than to human bipeds? Martin Poyser had some faint conception of the flavor such men must find in hot roast beef and fresh-drawn ale. He held his head on one side, and screwed up his mouth, as he nudged Bartle Massey, and watched half-witted Tom Tholer, otherwise known as "Tom Saft," receiving his second plateful of beef. A grin of delight broke over Tom's face as the plate was set down before him, between his knife and fork, which he held erect, as if they had been sacred tapers; but the delight was too strong to continue smouldering in a grin—it burst out the next instant in a long-drawn "haw, haw!" followed by a sudden collapse into utter gravity, as the knife and fork darted down on the prey. Martin Poyser's large person shook with his silent, unctuous laugh; he turned toward Mrs. Poyser to see if she, too, had been observant of

Tom, and the eyes of husband and wife met in a glance of good-natured amusement.

"Tom Saft" was a great favorite on the farm, where he played the part of the old jester, and made up for his practical deficiencies by his success in repartee. His hits, I imagine, were those of the flail, which falls quite at random, but nevertheless smashes an insect now and then. They were much quoted at sheep-shearing and hay-making times ; but I refrain from recording them here, lest Tom's wit should prove to be like that of many other by-gone jesters eminent in their day—rather of a temporary nature, not dealing with the deeper and more lasting relations of things.

Tom excepted, Martin Poyser had some pride in his servants and laborers, thinking with satisfaction that they were the best worth their pay of any set on the estate. There was Kester Bale, for example (Beale, probably, if the truth were known, but he was called Bale, and was not conscious of any claim to a fifth letter)—the old man with the close leather cap, and the net-work of wrinkles on his sun-browned face. Was there any man in Loamshire who knew better the "natur" of all farming work ? One of those invaluable laborers who cannot only turn their hand to everything, but excel in everything they turn their hand to. It is true, Kester's knees were much bent outward by this time, and he walked with a perpetual courtesy, as if he were among the most reverent of men. And so he was ; but I am obliged to admit that the object of his reverence was his own skill, toward which he performed some rather affecting acts of worship. He always thatched the ricks ; for if anything were his forte more than another, it was thatching ; and when the last touch had been put to the last beehive rick, Kester, whose home lay at some distance from the farm, would take a walk to the rick-yard in his best clothes on a Sunday morning, and stand in the lane, at a due distance, to contemplate his own thatching—walking about to get each rick from the proper point of view. As he courtesied along, with his eyes upturned to the straw knobs imitative of golden globes at the summits of the beehive ricks, which, indeed, were gold of the best sort, you might have imagined him to be engaged in some pagan act of adoration. Kester was an old bachelor, and reputed to have stockings full of coin, concerning which his master cracked a joke with him every pay-night ; not a new, unseasoned joke, but a good old one, that had been tried many times before, and had worn well. "Th' young measter's a merry mon," Kester frequently remarked ; for having begun,

his career by frightening away the crows under the last Martin Poyser but one, he could never cease to account the reigning Martin a young master. I am not ashamed of commemorating old Kester ; you and I are indebted to the hard hands of such men—hands that have long ago mingled with the soil they tilled so faithfully, thriftily making the best they could of the earth's fruits and receiving the smallest share as their own wages.

Then, at the end of the table, opposite his master, there was Alick, the shepherd and head man, with the ruddy face and broad shoulders, not on the best terms with old Kester ; indeed, their intercourse was confined to an occasional snarl, for though they probably differed little concerning hedging and ditching and the treatment of ewes, there was a profound difference of opinion between them as to their own respective merits. When Tityrus and Melibœus happen to be on the same farm, they are not sentimentally polite to each other. Alick, indeed, was not by any means a honeyed man : his speech had usually something of a snarl in it, and his broad-shouldered aspect something of the bull-dog expression—"Don't meddle with me, and I won't meddle with you ;" but he was honest even to the splitting of an oat-grain rather than take beyond his acknowledged share, and as "close-fisted" with his master's property as if it had been his own—throwing very small handfuls of damaged barley to the chickens, because a large handful affected his imagination painfully with a sense of profusion. Good-tempered Tim, the wagoner, who loved his horses, had his grudge against Alick in the matter of corn : they rarely spoke to each other, and never looked at each other, even over their dish of cold potatoes ; but then, as this was their usual mode of behavior toward all mankind, it would be an unsafe conclusion that they had more than transient fits of unfriendliness. The bucolic character at Hayslope, you perceive, was not of that entirely genial, merry, broad-grinning sort, apparently observed in most districts visited by artists. The mild radiance of a smile was a rare sight on a field-laborer's face, and there was seldom any gradation between bovine gravity and a laugh. Nor was every laborer so honest as our friend Alick. At this very table, among Mr. Poyser's men, there is that big Ben Tholoway, a very powerful thresher, but detected more than once in carrying away his master's corn in his pockets : an action which, as Ben was not a philosopher, could hardly be ascribed to absence of mind. However, his master had forgiven him, and

continued to employ him ; for the Tholoways had lived on the Common time out of mind, and had always worked for the Poyzers. And on the whole, I dare say, society was not much the worse because Ben had not six months of it at the treadmill ; for his views of depredation were narrow, and the House of Correction might have enlarged them. As it was, Ben ate his roast beef to-night with a serene sense of having stolen nothing more than a few peas and beans, as seed for his garden, since the last harvest-supper, and felt warranted in thinking that Alick's suspicious eye, forever upon him, was an injury to his innocence.

But *now* the roast beef was finished and the cloth was drawn, leaving a fair large deal table for the bright drinking-cans, and the foaming brown jugs, and the bright brass candlesticks, pleasant to behold. *Now*, the great ceremony of the evening was to begin—the harvest song, in which every man must join : he might be in tune, if he liked to be singular, but he must not sit with closed lips. The movement was obliged to be in triple time ; the rest was *ad libitum*.

As to the origin of this song—whether it came in its actual state from the brain of a single rhapsodist, or was gradually perfected by a school or succession of rhapsodists, I am ignorant. There is a stamp of unity, of individual genius, upon it, which inclines me to the former hypothesis, though I am not blind to the consideration that this unity may rather have arisen from that consensus of many minds which was a condition of primitive thought, foreign to our modern consciousness. Some will perhaps think that they detect in the first quatrain an indication of a lost line, which later rhapsodists, failing in imaginative vigor, have supplied by the feeble device of iteration : others, however, may rather maintain that this very iteration is an original felicity, to which none but the most prosaic minds can be insensible.

The ceremony connected with the song was a drinking ceremony. (That is perhaps a painful fact, but then, you know, we can not reform our forefathers.) During the first and second quatrain, sung decidedly *forte*, no can was filled.

“ Here's a health unto our master,
The founder of the feast ;
Here's a health unto our master
And to our mistress !

“ And may his doings prosper
Whate'er he takes in hand,
For we are all his servants,
And are at his command.”

But now, immediately before the third quatrain or chorus, sung *fortissimo*, with emphatic raps of the table, which gave the effect of cymbals and drum together, Alick's can was filled, and he was bound to empty it before the chorus ceased.

"Then drink, boys, drink!
And see ye do not spill,
For if ye do, ye shall drink two,
For 'tis our master's will.

When Alick had gone successfully through this test of steady-handed manliness, it was the turn of old Kester, at his right hand—and so on, till every man had drunk his initiatory pint under the stimulus of the chorus. Tom Saft—the rogue—took care to spill a little by accident; but Mrs. Poyser (too officiously, Tom thought,) interfered to prevent the execution of the penalty.

To any listener outside the door it would have been the reverse of obvious why the "Drink, boys, drink!" should have such an immediate and often-repeated encore; but once entered, he would have seen that all faces were at present sober, and most of them serious; it was the regular and respectable thing for those excellent farm-laborers to do, as much as for elegant ladies and gentlemen to smirk and bow over their wine-glasses. Bartle Massey, whose ears were rather sensitive, had gone out to see what sort of evening it was, at an early stage in the ceremony; and had not finished his contemplation until a silence of five minutes declared that "Drink, boys, drink!" was not likely to begin again for the next twelve-month. Much to the regret of the boys and Totty: on them the stillness fell rather flat, after that glorious thumping on the table, toward which Totty, seated on her father's knee, contributed with her small might and small fist.

When Bartle re-entered, however, there appeared to be a general desire for solo music after the choral. Nancy declared that Tim the wagoner knew a song, and was "allays singing like a lark i' the stable;" whereupon Mr. Poyser said encouragingly, "Come, Tim, lad, let's hear it." Tim looked sheepish, tucked down his head, and said he couldn't sing; but this encouraging invitation of the master's was echoed all round the table; it was a conversational opportunity; everybody could say "Come, Tim," except Alick, who never relaxed into the frivolity of unnecessary speech. At last Tim's next neighbor, Ben Tholoway, began to give emphasis to his speech by nudges, at which Tim, growing rather savage, said,

"Let me alooan, will ye? else I'll ma' ye sing a toon ye wonna like." A good-tempered wagoner's patience has limits, and Tim was not to be urged farther.

"Well, then, David, ye're the lad to sing," said Ben, willing to show that he was not discomfited by this check. "Sing 'M' loove's a roos wi'out a thorn.'"

The amatory David was a young man of an unconscious abstracted expression, which was due probably to a squint of superior intensity rather than to any mental characteristic; for he was not indifferent to Ben's invitation, but blushed, and laughed, and rubbed his sleeve over his mouth in a way that was regarded as a symptom of yielding. And for some time the company appeared to be much in earnest about the desire to hear David's song. But in vain. The lyrism of the evening was in the cellar at present, and was not to be drawn from that retreat just yet.

Meanwhile the conversation at the head of the table had taken a political turn. Mr. Craig was not above talking politics occasionally, though he piqued himself rather on a wise insight than on specific information. He saw so far beyond the mere facts of a case, that really it was superfluous to know them.

"I'm no reader o' the paper myself," he observed to-night, as he filled his pipe, "though I might read it fast enough if I liked, for there's Miss Lyddy has 'em, and's done with 'em i' no time; but there's Mills, now, sits i' the chimney-corner and reads the paper pretty nigh from morning to night, and when he's got to th' end on't he's more addle-headed that he was at the beginning. He's full o' this peace now, as they talk on; he's been reading and reading, and thinks he's got to the bottom on't. 'Why, Lor' bless you, Mills,' says I, 'you see no more into this thing nor you can see into the middle of a potato. I'll tell you what it is: you think it'll be a fine thing for the country; and I'm not again' it—mark my words—I'm not again' it. But it's my opinion as there's them at th' head o' this country as are worse enemies t' us nor Bony and all the mounseers he's got at's back; for as for the mounseers, you may skewer half a dozen of 'em at once as if they war frogs.'"

"Ay, ay," said Martin Poyser, listening with an air of much intelligence and edification, "they ne'er ate a bit o' beef i' their lives. Mostly sallet, I reckon."

"And says I to Mills," continued Mr. Craig, "'will you try to make me believe as furriners like them can do us half

th' harm them ministers do with their bad government? If King George 'ud turn 'em all away and govern by himself, he'd see everything righted. He might take on Billy Pitt again if he liked; but I don't see myself what we want wi' anybody besides king and Parliament. It's that nest o' ministers does the mischief, I tell you."

"Ah! it's fine talking," observed Mrs. Poyser, who was now seated near her husband, with Totty on her lap—"it's fine talking. It's hard work to tell which is Old Harry when everybody's got boots on."

"As for this peace," said Mr. Poyser, turning his head on one side in a dubitative manner, and giving a precautionary puff to his pipe between each sentence, "I don't know. Th' war's a fine thing for the country, an' how'll you keep up prices wi'out it? An' them French are a wicked sort o' folks, by what I can make out; what can you do better n'r fight 'em?"

"Ye're partly right there, Poyser," said Mr. Craig, "but I'm not again' the peace—to make a holiday for a bit. We can break it when we like, an' I'm in no fear o' Bony, for all they talk so much o' his cliverness. That's what I says to Mills this morning. Lor' bless you, he sees no more through Bony! . . . why, I put him up to more in three minutes than he gets from's paper all the year round. Says I, 'Ain I a gardener as knows his business, or aren't I, Mills? answer me that.' 'To be sure y' are, Craig,' says he—he's not a bad fellow, Mills isn't for a butler, but weak i' th' head. 'Well,' says I, 'you talk o' Bony's cliverness; would it be any use my being a first-rate gardener if I'd got nought but a quagmire to work on?' 'No,' says he. 'Well,' I says, 'that's just what it is wi' Bony. I'll not deny but he may be a bit cliver—he's no Frenchman born, as I understand; but what's he got at's back but mounseers?'"

Mr. Craig paused a moment with an emphatic stare after this triumphant specimen of Socratic argument, and then added, thumping the table rather fiercely.

"Why, it's a sure thing—and there's them 'ull bear witness to't—as i' one regiment where there was one man a-missing, they put the regimentals on a big monkey, and they fit him as the shells fits the walnut, and you couldn't tell the monkey from the mounseers!"

"Ah! think o' that now!" said Mr. Poyser, impressed at once with the political bearings of the fact, and with its striking interest as an anecdote in natural history.

"Come, Craig," said Adam, "that's a little too strong. You don't believe that. It's all nonsense about the French being such poor sticks. Mr. Irwine's seen 'em in their own country, and he says they've plenty o' fine fellows among 'em. And as for knowledge, and contrivances, and manufactures, there's a many things as we're a fine sight behind 'em in. It's poor foolishness to run down your enemies. Why, Nelson and the rest of 'em 'ud have no merit i' beating 'em if they were such offal as folks pretend."

Mr. Poyser looked doubtfully at Mr. Craig, puzzled by this opposition of authorities. Mr. Irwine's testimony was not to be disputed; but, on the other hand, Craig was a knowing fellow, and his view was less startling. Martin had never "heard tell" of the French being good for much. Mr. Craig had found no answer but such as was implied in taking a long draught of ale, and then looking down fixedly at the proportions of his own leg, which he turned a little outward for that purpose, when Bartle Massey returned from the fireplace, where he had been smoking his first pipe in quiet, and broke the silence by saying, as he thrust his forefinger into the canister,

"Why, Adam, how happened you not to be at church on Sunday? answer me that, you rascal. The anthem went limping without you. Are you going to disgrace your schoolmaster in his old age?"

"No, Mr. Massey," said Adam, "Mr. and Mrs. Poyser can tell you where I was. I was in no bad company."

"She's gone, Adam, gone to Snowfield," said Mr. Poyser, reminded of Dinah for the first time this evening. "I thought you'd ha' persuaded her better. Nought 'ud hold her but she must go yesterday forenoon. The missis has hardly got over it. I thought she'd ha' no sperrit for th' harvest supper."

Mrs. Poyser had thought of Dinah several times since Adam had come in, but she had had "no heart" to mention the bad news.

"What!" said Bartle, with an air of disgust. "Was there a woman concerned? Then I give you up, Adam."

"But it's a woman you'n spoke well on, Bartle," said Mr. Poyser. "Come, now, you canna draw back; you said once as women wouldna ha' been a bad invention if they'd all been like Dinah."

"I meant her voice, man—I meant her voice, that was all," said Bartle. "I can bear to hear her speak without wanting to put wool in my ears. As for other things, I dare say she's

like the rest o' the women—thinks two and two'll come to make five, if she cries and bothers enough about it."

"Ay, ay!" said Mrs. Poyser; "one 'ud think, an' hear some folks talk, as the men war 'cute enough to count the corns in a bag o' wheat wi' only smelling at it. They can see through a barn door, *they* can. Perhaps that's the reason they can see so little o' this side on't."

Martin Poyser shook with delighted laughter, and winked at Adam, as much as to say the schoolmaster was in for it now.

"Ah!" said Bartle, sneeringly, "the women are quick enough—they're quick enough. They know the rights of a story before they hear it, and can tell a man what his thoughts are before he knows 'em himself."

"Like enough," said Mrs. Poyser; "for the men are mostly so slow, their thoughts overrun 'em, an' they can only catch 'em by the tail. I can count a stocking-top while a man's getting's tongue ready; an' when he outs wi' his speech at last, there's little broth to be made on't. It's your dead chicks take the longest hatchin'. However, I'm not denyin' the women are foolish: God Almighty made 'em to match the men."

"Match!" said Bartle; "ay, as vinegar matches one's teeth. If a man says a word, his wife'll match it with a contradiction; if he's a mind for hot meat, his wife'll match it with cold bacon; if he laughs, she'll match him with whimpering. She's such a match as th' horse-fly is to th' horse: she's got the right venom to sting him with—the right venom to sting him with."

"Yes," said Mrs. Poyser, "I know what the men like—a poor soft, as 'ud simper at 'em like the pictur o' the sun, whether they did right or wrong, an' say thank you for a kick, an' pretend she didna know which end she stood uppermost, till her husband told her. That's what a man wants in a wife, mostly; he wants to make sure o' one fool as 'll tell him he's wise. But there's some men can do wi'out that—they think so much o' themselves a'ready; an' that's how it is there's old bachelors."

"Come, Craig," said Mr. Poyser, jocosely, "you mun get married pretty quick, else you'll be set down for an old bachelor; an' you see what the women 'll think on you."

"Well," said Mr. Craig, willing to conciliate Mrs. Poyser, and setting a high value on his own compliments, "*I like a cleverish woman—a woman o' sperrit—a managing woman.*"

"You're out there, Craig," said Bartle, dryly ; "you're out there. You judge o' you garden-stuff on a better plan than that : you pick the things for what they can excel in—for what they can excel in. You don't value your peas for their roots, or your carrots for their flowers. Now that's the way you should choose women : their cleverness 'll never come to much—never come to much ; but they make excellent simpletons, ripe, and strong-flavored."

"What dost say to that ?" said Mr. Poyser, throwing himself back and looking merrily at his wife.

"Say !" answered Mrs. Poyser, with dangerous fire kindling in her eye ; "why, I say as some folks' tongues are like the clocks as run on strikin', not to tell you the time o' the day, but because there's summat worng i' their own inside" . . .

Mrs. Poyser would probably have brought her rejoinder to a farther climax, if every one's attention had not at this moment been called to the other end of the table where the lyrism, which had at first only manifested itself by David's *sotto voce* performance of "My love's a rose without a thorn," had gradually assumed a rather deafening and complex character. Tim, thinking slightly of David's vocalization, was compelled to supersede that feeble buzz by a spirited commencement of "Three Merry Mowers ;" but David was not to be put down so easily, and showed himself capable of a copious crescendo, which was rendering it doubtful whether the rose would not predominate over the mowers, when old Kester, with an entirely unmoved and immovable aspect, suddenly set up a quavering treble—as if he had been an alarum, and the time was come for him to go off.

The company at Alick's end of the table took this form of vocal entertainment very much as a matter of course, being free from musical prejudices ; but Bartle Massey laid down his pipe and put his fingers in his ears ; and Adam, who had been longing to go, every since he had heard Dinah was not in the house rose, and said he must bid good-night.

"I'll go with you, lad," said Bartle ; "I'll go with you before my ears are split."

"I'll go round by the Common, and see you home, if you like, Mr. Massey," said Adam.

"Ay, ay," said Bartle ; "then we can have a bit o' talk together. I never get hold of you now."

"Eh ! it's a pity but you'd sit it out," said Martin Poyser. "They'll all go soon ; for th' missis niver let's 'em stay past ten."

But Adam was resolute, so the good-nights were said, and the two friends turned out on their star-light walk together.

"There's that poor fool, Vixen, whimpering for me at home," said Bartle. "I can never bring her here with me for fear she should be struck with Mrs. Poyser's eye, and the poor bitch might go limping forever after."

"I've never any need to drive Gyp back," said Adam, laughing. "He always turns back of his own heed when he finds out I'm coming nere."

"Ay, ay!" said Bartle. "A terrible woman! made of needles—made of needles. But I stick to Martin—I shall always stick to Martin. And he likes the needles, God help him! He's a cushion made on purpose for 'em."

"But she's a downright good-natured woman for all that," said Adam, "and as true as the daylight. She's a bit cross wi' the dogs when they offer to come in th' house, but if they depended on her, she'd take care and have 'em well fed. If her tongue's keen, her heart's tender: I've seen that in times o' trouble. She's one o' those women as are better than their word."

"Well, well," said Bartle, "I don't say th' apple isn't sound at the core; but it sets my teeth on edge—it sets my teeth on edge."

CHAPTER LIV.

THE MEETING ON THE HILL.

ADAM understood Dinah's haste to go away, and drew hope rather than discouragement from it. She was fearful lest the strength of her feeling toward him should hinder her from waiting and listening faithfully for the ultimate guiding voice from within.

"I wish I'd asked her to write to me, though," he thought. "And yet even that might disturb her a bit, perhaps. She wants to be quite quiet in her old way for a while. And I've no right to be impatient and interrupting her with my wishes. She's told me what her mind is; and she's not a woman to say one thing and mean another. I'll wait patiently."

That was Adam's wise resolution, and it throve excellently

for the first two or three weeks on the nourishment it got from the remembrance of Dinah's confession that Sunday afternoon. There is a wonderful amount of sustenance in the first few words of love. But toward the middle of October the resolution began to dwindle perceptibly, and showed dangerous symptoms of exhaustion. The weeks were unusually long : Dinah must surely have had more than enough time to make up her mind. Let a woman say what she will after she has once told a man that she loves him, he is a little too flushed and exalted with that first draught she offers him to care much about the taste of the second : he treads the earth with a very elastic step as he walks away from her, and makes light of all difficulties. But that sort of glow dies out ; memory gets sadly diluted with time, and is not strong enough to revive us. Adam was no longer so confident as he had been : he began to fear that perhaps Dinah's old life would have too strong a grasp upon her for any new feeling to triumph. If she had not felt this, she would surely have written to him to give him some comfort ; but it appeared that she held it right to discourage him. As Adam's confidence waned, his patience waned with it and he thought he must write himself ; he must ask Dinah not to leave him in painful doubt longer than was needful. He sat up late one night to write her a letter, but the next morning he burned it, afraid of its effect. It would be worse to have a discouraging answer by letter than from her own lips, for her presence reconciled him to her will.

You perceive how it was ; Adam was hungering for the sight of Dinah ; and when that sort of hunger reaches a certain stage, a lover is likely to still it though he may have to put his future in pawn.

But what harm could he do by going to Snowfield ? Dinah could not be displeased with him for it ; she had not forbidden him to go ; she must surely expect that he would go before long. By the second Sunday in October this view of the case had become so clear to Adam, that he was already on his way to Snowfield ; on horseback this time, for his hours were precious now, and he had borrowed Jonathan Burge's good nag for the journey.

What keen memories went along the road with him ! He had often been to Oakbourne and back since that first journey to Snowfield, but beyond Oakbourne, the gray stone walls, the broken country, the meagre trees, seemed to be telling him afresh the story of that painful past which he knew so well by heart. But no story is the same to us after a lapse

of time ; or rather, we who read it are no longer the same interpreters ; and Adam this morning brought with him new thoughts through that gray country—thoughts which gave an altered significance to its story of the past.

That is a base and selfish, even a blasphemous, spirit, which rejoices and is thankful over the past evil that has blighted or crushed another, because it has been made a source of unforeseen good to ourselves ; Adam could never cease to mourn over that mystery of human sorrow which had been brought so close to him ; he could never thank God for another's misery. And if I were capable of that narrow-sighted joy in Adam's behalf, I should still know he was not the man to feel it for himself ; he would have shaken his head at such a sentiment, and said, " Evil's evil, and sorrow's sorrow, and you can't alter its natur by wrapping it up in other words. Other folks were not created for my sake, that I should think all square when things turn out well for me."

But it is not ignoble to feel that the fuller life which a sad experience has brought us is worth our own personal share of pain ; surely it is not possible to feel otherwise, any more than it would be possible for a man with cataract to regret the painful process by which his dim, blurred sight of men as trees walking had been exchanged for clear outline and effulgent day. The growth of higher feeling within us is like the growth of faculty, bringing with it a sense of added strength ; we can no more wish to return to a narrower sympathy, than a painter or a musician can wish to return to his cruder manner, or a philosopher to his less complete formula.

Something like this sense of enlarged being was in Adam's mind this Sunday morning, as he rode along in vivid recollection of the past. His feeling towards Dinah, the hope of passing his life with her, had been the distant unseen point toward which that hard journey from Snowfield eighteen months ago had been leading him. Tender and deep as his love for Hetty had been—so deep that the roots of it would never be torn away—his love for Dinah was better and more precious to him ; for it was the outgrowth of that fuller life which had come to him from his acquaintance with deep sorrow. " It's like as if it was a new strength to me," he said to himself, " love her, and know as she loves me. I shall look t' her to help me to see things right. For she's better than I am—there's less o' self in her and pride. And it's a feeling as gives you a sort o' liberty, as if you could walk more fearless, when you've more trust in another, then y' have in yourself. I've always

been thinking I knew better than them as belonged to me, and that' a poor sort o' life, when you can't look to them nearest to you t' help you with a bit better thought than what you've got inside you a'ready."

It was more than two o'clock in the afternoon when Adam came in sight of the gray town on the hill-side, and looked earchingly toward the green valley below for the first glimpse of the old thatched roof near the ugly red mill. The scene looked less harsh in the soft October sunshine than it had done in the eager time of early spring; and the one grand chance it possessed in common with all wide-stretching woodless regions—that it filled you with a new consciousness of the overarching sky—had a milder, more soothing influence than usual on this almost cloudless day. Adam's doubts and fears melted under this influence as the delicate web-like clouds has gradually melted away into the clear blue above him. He seemed to see Dinah's gentle face assuring him, with its looks alone, of all he longed to know.

He did not expect Dinah to be at home at this hour, but he got down from his horse and tied it at the little gate, that he might ask where she was gone to-day. He had set his mind on following her and bringing her home. She was gone to Sloman's End, a hamlet about three miles off, over the hill, the old woman told him: had set off directly after morning chapel, to preach in a cottage there, as her habit was. Any body at the town would tell him the way to Sloman's End. So Adam got on his horse again and rode to the town, putting up at the old inn, and taking a hasty dinner there in the company of the too chatty landlord, from whose friendly questions and reminiscences he was glad to escape as soon as possible, and set out toward Sloman's End. With all his haste, it was nearly four o'clock before he could set off, and he thought that as Dinah had gone so early, she would, perhaps, already be near returning. The little gray, desolate-looking hamlet, un-screened by sheltering trees, lay in sight long before he reached it; and, as he came near, he could hear the sound of voices singing a hymn. "Perhaps that's the last hymn before they come away," Adam thought; "I'll walk back a bit, and turn again to meet her farther off the village. He walked back till he got nearly to the top of the hill again, and seated himself on a loose stone against the low wall, to watch till he should see the little black figure leaving the hamlet and winding up the hill. He chose this spot, almost at the top of the hill, because it was away from all eyes—no house, no

cattle, not even a nibbling sheep near—no presence but the still lights and shadows, and the great embracing sky.

She was much longer coming than he expected : he waited an hour at least, watching for her and thinking of her, while the afternoon shadows lengthened, and the light grew softer. At last he saw the little black figure coming from between the gray houses, and gradually approaching the foot of the hill. Slowly, Adam thought ; but Dinah was really walking at her usual pace, with a light quiet step. Now she was beginning to wind along the path up the hill, but Adam would not move yet : he would not meet her too soon : he had set his heart on meeting her in this assured loneliness. And now he began to fear lest he should startle her too much ; “ Yet,” he thought, “ she’s not one to be overstartled ; she’s always so calm and quiet, as if she was prepared for anything.”

What was she thinking of as she wound up the hill ? Perhaps she had found complete repose without him, and had ceased to feel any need of his love. On the verge of a decision we all tremble : hope pauses with fluttering wings.

But now at last she was very near, and Adam rose from the stone wall. It happened that, just as he walked forward, Dinah had paused and turned round to look back at the village ; who does not pause and look back in mounting a hill ? Adam was glad ; for, with the fine instinct of a lover, he felt that it would be best for her to hear his voice before she saw him. He came within three paces of her, and then said, “ Dinah ! ” She started without looking round, as if she connected the sound with no place. “ Dinah ! ” Adam said again. He knew quite well what was in her mind. She was so accustomed to think of impressions as purely spiritual monitions, that she looked for no material visible accompaniment of the voice.

But this second time she looked round. What a look of yearning love it was that the mild gray eyes turned on the strong dark-eyed man ! She did not start again at the sight of him ; she said nothing, but moved toward him so that his arm could clasp her round.

And they walked on so in silence, while the warm tears fell. Adam was content, and said nothing. It was Dinah who spoke first.

“ Adam,” she said, “ it is the Divine Will. My soul is so knit to yours that it is but a divided life I live without you. And this moment, now you are with me, and I feel that our hearts are filled with the same love, I have a fullness of

strength to bear and do our heavenly Father's will, that I had lost before."

Adam paused and looked into her sincere, loving eyes.

"Then we'll never part any more, Dinah, till death parts us."

"And they kissed each other with a deep joy.

What greater thing is there for two human souls, than to feel that they are joined for life—to strengthen each other in all labor, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting?

CHAPTER LV.

MARRIAGE BELLS.

IN little more than a month after that meeting on the hill—on a rimy morning in departing November—Adam and Dinah were married.

It was an event much thought of in the village. All Mr. Burge's men had a holiday, and all Mr. Poyser's; and most of those who had a holiday appeared in their best clothes at the wedding. I think there was hardly an inhabitant of Hayslope specially mentioned in this history and still resident in the parish on this November morning, who was not either in church to see Adam and Dinah married, or near the church door to greet them as they came forth. Mrs. Irwine and her daughters were waiting at the church-yard gates in their carriage (for they had a carriage now) to shake hands with the bride and bridegroom and wish them well; and in the absence of Miss Lydia Donni-thorne at Bath, Mrs. Best, Mr. Mills, and Mr. Craig had felt it incumbent on them to represent "the family" at the Chase on the occasion. The church-yard walk was quite lined with familiar faces, many of them faces that had first looked at Dinah when she preached on the Green; and no wonder they showed this eager interest on her marriage morning, for nothing like Dinah and the history which had brought her and Adam Bede together had been-known at Hayslope within the memory of man.

Bessy Cranage, in her neatest cap and frock, was crying.

though she did not exactly know why ; for, as her cousin Wiry Ben, who stood near her, judiciously suggested, Dinah was not going away, and if Bessy was in low spirits, the best thing for her to do was to follow Dinah's example, and marry an honest fellow who was ready to have her. Next to Bessy, just with in the church door, there were the Poyser children, peeping round the corner of the pews to get a sight of the mysterious, ceremony ; Totty's face wearing an unusual air of anxiety at the idea of seeing cousin Dinah come back looking rather old-for in Totty's experience no married people were young.

I envy them all the sight they had when the marriage was fairly ended and Adam led Dinah out of the church. She was not in black this morning : for her aunt Poyser would by no means allow such a risk of incurring bad luck, and had her self made a present of the wedding dress, made all of gray though in the usual Quaker form, for on this point Dinah could not give way. So the lily face looked out with sweet gravity from under a gray Quaker bonnet, neither smiling nor blushing but with lips trembling a little under the weight of solemn, feelings. Adam, as he pressed her arm to his side, walked with his old erectness and his head thrown rather backward as if to face all the world better, but it was not because he was particularly proud this morning, as is the wont of bridegrooms, for his happiness was of a kind that had little reference to men's opinion of it. There was a tinge of sadness in his deep joy ; Dinah knew it, and did not feel aggrieved.

There were three other couples, following the bride and bridegroom : first, Martin Poyser, looking as cheery as a bright fire on this rimy morning, led quiet Mary Burge, the bridesmaid ; then came Seth, serenely happy, with Mrs. Poyser on his arm ; and last of all Bartle Massey, with Lisbeth—Lisbeth in a new gown and bonnet, too busy with her pride in her son, and her delight in possessing the one daughter she had desired, to devise a single pretext for complaint.

Bartle Massey had consented to attend the wedding at Adam's earnest request, under protest against marriage in general, and the marriage of a sensible man in particular. Nevertheless, Mr. Poyser had a joke against him after the wedding dinner, to the effect that in the vestry he had given the bride one more kiss than was necessary.

Behind this last couple came Mr. Irwine, glad at heart over this good morning's work of joining Adam and Dinah. For he had seen Adam in the worst moments of his sorrow ; and what better harvest from that painful seed-time could there be

than this? The love that had brought hope and comfort in the hour of despair, the love that had found its way to the dark prison cell and to poor Hetty's darker soul—this strong, gentle love was to be Adam's companion and helper till death.

There was much shaking of hands mingled with "God bless you's," and other good wishes to the four couples, at the churchyard gate, Mr. Poyser answering for the rest with unwonted vivacity of tongue, for he had all the appropriate wedding-day jokes at his command. And the women, he observed, could never do anything but put finger in eye at a wedding. Even Mrs. Poyser could not trust herself to speak, as the neighbors shook hands with her; and Lisbeth began to cry in the face of the very first person who told her she was getting young again.

Mr. Joshua Rann, having a slight touch of rheumatism, did not join in the ringing of the bells this morning, and, looking on with some contempt at these informal greetings which required no official co-operation from the clerk, began to hum in his musical bass, "Oh, what a joyful thing it is," by way of preluding a little to the effect he intended to produce in the wedding psalm next Sunday.

"That's a bit of good news to cheer Arthur," said Mr. Irwine to his mother, as they drove off. "I shall write to him the first thing when we get home."

EPILOGUE.

IT is near the end of June, in 1807. The workshops have been shut up half an hour or more in Adam Bede's timber-yard, which used to be Jonathan Burge's, and the mellow evening light is falling on the pleasant house with the buff walls and the soft gray thatch, very much as it did when we saw Adam bringing in the keys on that June evening nine years ago.

There is a figure we know well, just come out of the house, and shading her eyes with her hands as she looks for something in the distance; for the rays that fall on her white borderless cap and her pal eauburn hair are very dazzling. But now she turns away from the sunlight and looks toward the door. We can see the sweet pale face quite well now; it is scarcely at all altered—only a little fuller, to correspond

to her more matronly figure, which still seems light and active enough in the plain black dress.

"I see him, Seth," Dinah said, as she looked into the house. "Let us go and meet him. Come, Lisbeth, come with mother."

The last call was answered immediately by a small, fair creature with pale auburn hair and gray eyes, little more than four years old, who ran out silently and put her hand into her mother's.

"Come, uncle Seth," said Dinah.

"Ay, ay, we're coming," Seth answered from within and presently appeared stooping under the doorway, being taller than usual by the black head of a sturdy two-year-old nephew, who had caused some delay by demanding to be carried on uncle's shoulder.

"Better take him on thy arm, Seth," said Dinah, looking fondly at the stout black-eyed fellow. "He's troublesome to thee so."

"Nay, nay; Addy likes a ride on my shoulder. I can carry him so for a bit." A kindness which Addy acknowledged by drumming his heels with promising force against uncle Seth's chest. But to walk by Dinah's side, and be tyrannized over by Dinah and Adam's children, was uncle Seth's earthly happiness.

"Where didst see him?" asked Seth, as they walked on into the adjoining field. "I can't catch sight of him anywhere."

"Between the hedges by the roadside," said Dinah. "I saw his hat and his shoulder. There he is again."

"Trust thee for catching sight of him if he's anywhere to be seen," said Seth, smiling. "Thee't like poor mother used to be. She was always on the look-out for Adam, and could see him sooner than other folks, for all her eyes got dim."

"He's been longer than he expected," said Dinah, taking Arthur's watch from a small side pocket and looking at it; "it's nigh upon seven now."

"Ay, they'd have a deal to say to one another," said Seth, "and the meeting 'ud touch'em both pretty closish. Why, it's getting on towards eight year since they parted."

"Yes," said Dinah, "Adam was greatly moved this morning at the thought of the change he should see in the poor young man, from the sickness he has undergone, as well as the years which have changed us all. And the death of the poor

wanderer, when she was coming back to us, has been sorrow upon sorrow."

"See, Addy," said Seth, lowering the young one to his arm now, and pointing, "there's father coming—at the far stile."

Dinah hastened her steps, and little Lisbeth ran on at her utmost speed till she clasped her father's leg. Adam patted her head and lifted her up to kiss her, but Dinah could see the marks of agitation on his face as she approached him, and he put her arm within his in silence.

"Well, youngster, must I take you?" he said, trying to smile, when Addy stretched out his arms—ready, with the usual baseness of infancy, to give up his uncle Seth at once, now there was some rarer patronage at hand.

"It's cut me a good deal, Dinah," Adam said at last, when they were walking on.

"Didst find him greatly altered?" said Dinah.

"Why, he's altered and yet not altered. I should ha' known him anywhere. But his color's changed, and he looks sadly. However, the doctors say he'll soon be set right in his own country air. He's all sound in th' inside; it's only the fever shattered him so. But he speaks just the same, and smiles at me just as he did when he was a lad. It's wonderful how he's always had just the same sort o' look when he smiles."

"I've never seen him smile, poor young man," said Dinah.

"But thee *will* see him smile, to-morrow," said Adam.

"He asked after thee the first thing when he began to come round, and we could talk to one another. 'I hope she isn't altered,' he said, 'I remember her face so well.' I told him 'no,'" Adam continued, looking fondly at the eyes that were turned up toward his, "only a bit plumper, as thee'dst a right to be after seven year. 'I may come and see her to-morrow, mayn't I?' he said; 'I long to tell her how I've thought of her all these years.'"

"Didst tell him I'd always used the watch?" enquired Dinah.

"Ay; and we talked a deal about thee, for he says he never say a woman a bit like thee. 'I shall turn Methodist some day,' he said, 'when she preaches out of doors, and go to hear her.' And I said, 'Nay, sir, you can't do that, for Conference has forbid the women preaching, and she's given it up, all but talking to the people a bit in their houses.'"

"Ay!" said Seth, who could not repress a comment on this point, "and a sore pity it was o' Conference; and if Dinah

had seen as I did, we'd ha' left the Wesleyans and' joined a body that 'ud put no bonds on Chirstian liberty."

"Nay, lad, nay," said Adam, "she was right and thee wast wrong. There's no rule so wise but what it's a pity for somebody or other. Most o' the women do more harm nor good with their preaching : they've not got Dinah's gift nor her sperrit ; and she's seen that, and she thought it right to set th' example o' submitting, for she's not held from other sorts o' teaching. And I agree with her, and approve o' what she did."

Seth was silent. This was a standing subject of difference rarely alluded to, and Dinah, wishing to quit it at once, said,

"Didst remember, Adam, to speak to Colonel Donnithorne the words my uncle and aunt intrusted to thee?"

"Yes ; and he's going to the Hall Farm with Mr. Irwine the day after to-morrow. Mr. Irwine came in while we were talking about it, and he would have it as the Colonel must see nobody but thee to-morrow : he said—and he's in the right of it—as it'll be bad for him t' have his feelings stirred with seeing many people one after another. 'We must get you strong and hearty,' he said, 'that's the first thing to be done, Arthur, and then you shall have your own way. But I shall keep you under your old tutor's thumb till then.' Mr. Irwine's fine and joyful at having him home again."

Adam was silent a little while, and then said :

"It was very cutting when we first saw one another. He'd never heard about poor Hetty till Mr. Irwine met him in London, for the letters missed him on his journey. The first thing he said to me, when we'd got hold o' one another's hands, was, 'I could never do anything for her, Adam—she lived long enough for all the suffering—and I'd thought so of the time when I might do something for her. But you told me the truth when you said to me once, 'There's a sort of wrong that can never be made up for.'"

"Why, there's Mr. and Mrs. Poyser coming in at the yard gate," said Seth.

"So there is," said Dinah. "Run, Lisbeth, run to meet Aunt Poyser. Come in, Adam, and rest ; it has been a hard day for thee."

ROMOLA.

BY

GEORGE ELIOT.

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ROMOLA.

PROEM.

MORE than three centuries and a half ago, in the mid spring-time of 1492, we are sure that the angel of the dawn, as he traveled with broad slow wing from the Levant to the Pillars of Hercules, and from the summits of the Caucasus across all the snowy Alpine ridges to the dark nakedness of the Western isles, saw nearly the same outline of firm land and unstable sea—saw the same great mountain shadows on the same valleys as he has seen to-day—saw olive mounts, and pine forests, and the broad plains green with young corn or rain-freshened grass—saw the domes and spires of cities rising by the river-sides or mingled with the sedge-like masts on the many-curved sea-coast, in the same spots where they rise to-day. And as the faint light of his course pierced into the dwellings of men, it fell, as now, on the rosy warmth of nestling children; on the haggard waking of sorrow and sickness; on the hasty uprising of the hard-handed laborer; and on the late sleep of the night-student, who had been questioning the stars or the sages, or his own soul, for that hidden knowledge which would break through the barrier of man's brief life, and show its dark path, that seemed to bend no whither, to be an arc in an immeasurable circle of light and glory. The great river-courses which have shaped the lives of men have hardly changed; and those other streams, the life-currents that ebb and flow in human hearts, pulsate to the same great needs, the same great loves and terrors. As our thought follows close in the slow wake of the dawn, we are impressed with the broad sameness of the human lot, which never alters in the main headings of its history—hunger and labor, seed-time and harvest, love and death.

Even if, instead of following the dim daybreak, our imagination pauses on a certain historical spot and awaits

the fuller morning, we may see a world-famous city, which has hardly changed its outline since the days of Columbus, seeming to stand as an almost unviolated symbol, amidst the flux of human things, to remind us that we still resemble the men of the past more than we differ from them, as the great mechanical principles on which those domes and towers were raised must make a likeness in human building that will be broader and deeper than all possible change. And doubtless, if the spirit of a Florentine citizen, whose eyes were closed for the last time while Columbus was still waiting and arguing for the three poor vessels with which he was to set sail from the port of Palos, could return from the shades and pause where our thought is pausing, he would believe that there must still be fellowship and understanding for him among the inheritors of his birthplace.

Let us suppose that such a Shade has been permitted to revisit the glimpses of the golden morning, and is standing once more on the famous hill of San Miniato, which overlooks Florence from the south.

The Spirit is clothed in his habit as he lived: the folds of his well-lined black silk garment or *lucco* hang in grave unbroken lines from neck to ankle; his plain cloth cap, with its *becchetto*, or long hanging strip of drapery, to serve as a scarf in case of need, surmounts a penetrating face, not, perhaps, very handsome, but with a firm, well-cut mouth, kept distinctly human by a close-shaven lip and chin. It is a face charged with memories of a keen and various life passed below there on the banks of the gleaming river; and as he looks at the scene before him, the sense of familiarity is so much stronger than the perception of change, that he thinks it might be possible to descend once more amongst the streets, and take up that busy life where he left it. For it is not only the mountains and the westward-bending river that he recognizes; not only the dark sides of Mount Morello opposite to him, and the long valley of the Arno that seems to stretch its gray low-tufted luxuriance to the far-off ridges of Carrara; and the steep height of Fiesole, with its crown of monastic walls and cypresses; and all the green and gray slopes sprinkled with villas which he can name as he looks at them. He sees other familiar objects much closer to his daily walks. For though he misses the seventy or more towers that once surmounted the walls, and encircled the city as with a regal diadem, his eyes will not dwell on that

blank; they are drawn irresistibly to the unique tower springing, like a tall flower-stem drawn toward the sun, from the square turreted mass of the Old Palace in the very heart of the city—the tower that looks none the worse for the four centuries that have passed since he used to walk under it. The great dome too, greatest in the world, which, in his early boyhood, had been only a daring thought in the mind of a small, quick-eyed man—there it raises its large curves still, eclipsing the hills. And the well-known bell-towers—Giotto's, with its distant hint of rich color, and the graceful-spired Badia, and the rest—he looked at them all from the shoulder of his nurse.

“Surely,” he thinks, “Florence can still ring her bells with the solemn hammer-sound that used to beat on the hearts of her citizens and strike out the fire there. And here, on the right, stands the long dark mass of Santa Croce, where we buried our famous dead, laying the laurel on their cold brows and fanning them with the breath of praise and of banners. But Santa Croce had no spire then: we Florentines were too full of great building projects to carry them all out in stone and marble; we had our frescoes and our shrines to pay for, not to speak of rapacious condottieri, bribed royalty, and purchased territories, and our façades and spires must needs wait. But what architect can the Frati Minori* have employed to build that spire for them? If it had been built in my day, Filippo Brunelleschi or Michelozzo would have devised something of another fashion than that—something worthy to crown the church of Arnolfo.”

At this the Spirit, with a sigh, lets his eyes travel onto the city walls, and now he dwells on the change there with wonder at these modern times. Why have five out of the eleven convenient gates been closed? And why, above all, should the towers have been leveled that were once a glory and defense? Is the world become so peaceful, then, and do Florentines dwell in such harmony, that there are no longer conspiracies to bring ambitious exiles home again with armed bands at their back? These are difficult questions: it is easier and pleasanter to recognize the old than to account for the new. And there flows Arno, with its bridges just where they used to be—the Ponte Vecchio, least like other bridges in the world, laden with the same quaint shops where our Spirit remembers lingering a little

* The Franciscans.

on his way perhaps to look at the progress of that great palace which Messer Luca Pitti had set a building with huge stones got from the Hill of Bogoli * close behind, or perhaps to transact a little business with the cloth-dressers in Oltrarno. The exorbitant line of the Pitti roof is hidden from San Miniato; but the yearning of the old Florentine is not to see Messer Luca's too ambitious palace which he built unto himself; it is to be down among those narrow streets and busy humming Piazze where he inherited the eager life of his fathers. Is not the anxious voting with black and white beans still going on down there? Who are the Priori in these months, eating soberly-regulated official dinners in the Palazzo Vecchio, with removes of tripe and boiled partridges, seasoned by practical jokes against the ill-fated butt among those potent signors? Are not the significant banners still hung from the windows—still distributed with decent pomp under Orcagna's Loggia every two months?

Life had its zest for the old Florentine when he, too, trod the marble steps and shared in those dignities. His politics had an area as wide as his trade, which stretched from Syria to Britain, but they had also the passionate intensity, and the detailed practical interest, which could belong only to a narrow scene of corporate action; only to the members of a community shut in close by the hills and by walls of six miles' circuit, where men knew each other as they passed in the street, set their eyes every day on the memorials of their commonwealth, and were conscious of having not simply the right to vote, but the chance of being voted for. He loved his honors and his gains, the business of his counting-house, of his guild, of the public council-chamber; he loved his enmities too, and fingered the white bean which was to keep a hated name out of the *borsa* with more complacency than if it had been a golden florin. He loved to strengthen his family by a good alliance, and went home with a triumphant light in his eyes after concluding a satisfactory marriage for his son or daughter under his favorite loggia in the evening cool; he loved his game at chess under that same loggia, and his biting jest, and even his coarse joke, as not beneath the dignity of a man eligible for the highest magistracy. He had gained an insight into all sorts of affairs at home and abroad: he had been of the "Ten" who managed the war department, of the "Eight" who attended to home

* Now Boboli.

discipline, of the Priori or Signori who were the heads of the executive government; he had even risen to the supreme office of Gonfaloniere; he had made one in embassies to the Pope and to the Venetians; and he had been commissary to the hired army of the Republic, directing the inglorious bloodless battles in which no man died of brave breast wounds—*virtuosi colpi*—but only of casual falls and tramlings. And in this way he had learned to distrust men without bitterness; looking on life mainly as a game of skill, but not dead to traditions of heroism and clean-handed honor. For the human soul is hospitable, and will entertain conflicting sentiments and contradictory opinions with much impartiality. It was his pride besides, that he was duly tinctured with the learning of his age, and judged not altogether with the vulgar, but in harmony with the ancients: he, too, in his prime, had been eager for the most correct manuscripts, and had paid many florins for antique vases and for disinterred busts of the ancient immortals—some, perhaps, *truncis naribus*, wanting as to the nose, but not the less authentic; and in his old age he had made haste to look at the first sheets of that fine Homer which was among the early glories of the Florentine press. But he had not, for all that, neglected to hang up a waxen image or double of himself under the protection of the Madonna Annunziata, or to do penance for his sins in large gifts to the shrines of saints whose lives had not been modeled on the study of the classics; he had not even neglected making liberal bequests toward buildings for the Frati, against whom he had leveled many a jest.

For the Unseen Powers were mighty. Who knew—who was sure—that there was *any* name given to them behind which there was no angry force to be appeased, no intercessory pity to be won? Were not gems medicinal, though they only pressed the finger? Were not all things charged with occult virtues? Lucretius might be right—he was an ancient, and a great poet; Luigi Pulci, too, who was suspected of not believing anything from the roof upward (*dal tetto in su*), had very much the air of being right over the supper-table, when the wine and jests were circulating fast, though he was only a poet in the vulgar tongue. There were even learned personages who maintained that Aristotle, wisest of men (unless, indeed, Plato were wiser?) was a thoroughly irreligious philosopher; and a liberal scholar must entertain all speculations. But the negatives

might, after all, prove false; nay, seemed manifestly false, as the circling hours swept past him, and turned round with graver faces. For had not the world become Christian? Had he not been baptized in San Giovanni, where the dome is awful with the symbols of coming judgment, and where the altar bears a crucified Image disturbing to perfect complacency in one's self and the world? Our resuscitated Spirit was not a pagan philosopher, nor a philosophizing pagan poet, but a man of the fifteenth century, inheriting its strange web of belief and unbelief; of Epicurean levity and fetichistic dread; of pedantic impossible ethics uttered by rote, and crude passions acted out with childish impulsiveness; of inclination toward a self-indulgent paganism, and inevitable subjection to that human conscience which, in the unrest of a new growth, was filling the air with strange prophecies and presentiments.

He had smiled, perhaps, and shaken his head dubiously, as he heard simple folk talk of a Pope Angelico, who was to come by-and-by and bring in a new order of things, to purify the Church from simony, and the lives of the clergy from scandal—a state of affairs too different from what existed under Innocent VIII. for a shrewd merchant and politician to regard the prospect as worthy of entering into his calculations. But he felt the evils of the time, nevertheless; for he was a man of public spirit, and public spirit can never be wholly immoral, since its essence is care for a common good. That very Quaresima or Lent of 1492 in which he died, still in his erect old age, he had listened in San Lorenzo, not without a mixture of satisfaction, to the preaching of a Dominican Friar, named Girolamo Savonarola, who denounced with a rare boldness the worldliness and vicious habits of the clergy, and insisted on the duty of Christian men not to live for their own ease when wrong was triumphing in high places, and not to spend their wealth in outward pomp even in the churches, when their fellow-citizens were suffering from want and sickness. The Frate carried his doctrine rather too far for elderly ears; yet it was a memorable thing to see a preacher move his audience to such a pitch that the women even took off their ornaments, and delivered them up to be sold for the benefit of the needy.

“He was a noteworthy man, that Prior of San Marco,” thinks our Spirit; “somewhat arrogant and extreme, perhaps, especially in his denunciations of speedy vengeance.

Ah, *Iddio non paga il Sabato** — the wages of men's sins often linger in their payment, and I myself saw much established wickedness of long-standing prosperity. But a Frate Predicatore who wanted to move the people—how could he be moderate? He might have been a little less defiant and curt, though, to Lorenzo de Medici, whose family had been the very makers of San Marco: was that quarrel ever made up? And our Lorenzo himself, with the dim outward eyes and the subtle inward vision, did he get over that illness at Careggi? It was but a sad, uneasy-looking face that he would carry out of the world which had given him so much, and there were strong suspicions that his handsome son would play the part of Rehoboam. How has it all turned out? Which party is likely to be banished and have its houses sacked just now? Is there any successor of the incomparable Lorenzo, to whom the great Turk is so gracious as to send over presents of rare animals, rare relics, rare manuscripts, or fugitive enemies, suited to the tastes of a Christian Magnifico who is at once lettered and devout—and also slightly vindictive? And what famous scholar is dictating the Latin letters of the Republic—what fiery philosopher is lecturing on Dante in the Duomo, and going home to write bitter invectives against the father and mother of the bad critic who may have found fault with his classical spelling? Are our wiser heads leaning toward alliance with the Pope and the Regno,† or are they rather inclining their ears to the orators of France and of Milan?

“There is knowledge of these things to be had in the streets below, on the beloved *marmi* in front of the churches and under the sheltering Loggie, where surely our citizens have still their gossip and debates, their bitter and merry jests as of old. For are not the well-remembered buildings all there? The changes have not been so great in those uncounted years. I will go down and hear—I will tread the familiar pavement, and hear once again the speech of Florentines.”

Go not down, good Spirit! for the changes are great and the speech of Florentines would sound as a riddle in your ears. Or, if you go, mingle with no politicians on the *marmi*, or elsewhere; ask no questions about trade in the Calimara; confuse yourself with no inquiries into scholarship, official or monastic. Only look at the sunlight and

*“God does not pay on a Saturday.”

†The name given to Naples by way of distinction among the Italian states.

shadows on the grand walls that were built solidly, and have endured in their grandeur; look at the faces of the little children, making another sunlight amid the shadows of age; look, if you will, into the churches, and hear the same chants, see the same images as of old—the images of willing anguish for a great end, of beneficent love and ascending glory; see upturned living faces and lips moving to the old prayers for help. These things have not changed. The sunlight and shadows bring their old beauty and waken the old heart-strains at morning, noon, and even-tide; the little children are still the symbol of the eternal marriage between love and duty; and men still yearn for the reign of peace and righteousness—still own *that* life to be the highest which is a conscious voluntary sacrifice. For the Pope Angelico is not come yet.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHIPWRECKED STRANGER.

THE Loggia de Cerchi stood in the heart of old Florence, within a labyrinth of narrow streets behind the Badia, now rarely threaded by the stranger, unless in a dubious search for a certain severely simple doorplace, bearing this inscription:

QUI NACQUE IL DIVINO POETA.

To the ear of Dante, the same streets rang with the shout and clash of fierce battle between rival families; but in the fifteenth century, they were only noisy with the unhistorical quarrels and broad jests of wool-carders in the cloth-producing quarters of San Martino and Garbo.

Under this loggia, in the early morning of the ninth of April, 1492, two men had their eyes fixed on each other: one was stooping slightly, and looking downward with the scrutiny of curiosity; the other, lying on the pavement, was looking upward with the startled gaze of a suddenly-awakened dreamer.

The standing figure was the first to speak. He was a gray-haired, broad-shouldered man, of the type which, in Tuscan phrase, is moulded with the fist and polished with the pickaxe; but the self-important gravity which had written itself out in the deep lines about his brow and mouth seemed intended to correct any contemptuous inferences from the hasty workmanship which Nature had bestowed on his exterior. He had deposited a large well-filled bag, made of skins, on the pavement, and before him hung a peddler's basket, garnished partly with small woman's-ware, such as thread and pins, and partly with fragments of glass, which had probably been taken in exchange for those commodities.

"Young man," he said, pointing to a ring on the finger of the reclining figure, "when your chin has got a stiffer crop on it, you'll know better than to take your nap in

street corners with a ring like that on your forefinger. By the holy 'vangels! if it had been anybody but me standing over you two minutes ago—but Bratti Ferravecchi is not the man to steal. The cat couldn't eat her mouse if she didn't catch it alive, and Bratti couldn't relish gain if it had no taste of a bargain. Why, young man, one San Giovanni, three years ago, the Saint sent a dead body in my way—a blind beggar, with his cap well lined with pieces— but, if you'll believe me, my stomach turned against the money I'd never bargained for, till it came into my head that San Giovanni owed me the pieces for what I spend yearly at the Festa; besides, I buried the body and paid for a mass—and so I saw it was a fair bargain. But how comes a young man like you, with the face of Messer San Michele, to be sleeping on a stone bed with the wind for a curtain?"

The deep guttural sounds of the speaker were scarcely intelligible to the newly-waked, bewildered listener, but he understood the action of pointing to his ring: he looked down at it, and, with a half-automatic obedience to the warning, took it off and thrust it within his doublet, rising at the same time and stretching himself.

"Your tunic and hose match ill with that jewel, young man," said Bratti, deliberately. "Anybody might say the saints had sent *you* a dead body; but if you took the jewels, I hope you buried him—and you can afford a mass or two for him into the bargain."

Something like a painful thrill appeared to dart through the frame of the listener, and arrest the careless stretching of his arms and chest. For an instant he turned on Bratti with a sharp frown; but he immediately recovered an air of indifference, took off the red Levantine cap which hung like a great purse over his left ear, pushed back his long dark-brown curls, and glancing at his dress, said, smilingly—

"You speak truth, friend: my garments are as weather-stained as an old sail, and they are not old, either, only, like an old sail, they have had a sprinkling of the sea as well as the rain. The fact is, I'm a stranger in Florence, and when I came in footsore last night I preferred flinging myself in a corner of this hospitable porch to hunting any longer for a chance hostelry, which might turn out to be a nest of blood-suckers of more sorts than one."

"A stranger, in good sooth," said Bratti, "for the words come all melting out of your throat, so that a

Christian and a Florentine can't tell a hook from a hanger. But you're not from Genoa? More likely from Venice, by the cut of your clothes."

"At this present moment," said the stranger, smiling, "it is of less importance where I come from than where I can go to for a mouthful of breakfast. This city of yours turns a grim look on me just here: can you show me the way to a more lively quarter, where I can get a meal and a lodging?"

"That I can," said Bratti, "and it is your good fortune, young man, that I have happened to be walking in from Rovezzano this morning, and turned out of my way to Mercato Vecchio to say an Ave at the Badia. That, I say, is your good fortune. But it remains to be seen what is *my* profit in the matter. Nothing for nothing, young man. If I show you the way to Mercato Vecchio, you'll swear by your patron saint to let me have the bidding for that stained suit of yours, when you set up a better—as doubtless you will."

"Agreed, by San Niccolò," said the other, laughing. "But now let us set off to this said Mercato, for I feel the want of a better lining to this doublet of mine which you are coveting."

"Coveting? Nay," said Bratti, heaving his bag on his back and setting out. But he broke off in his reply, and burst out in loud, harsh tones, not unlike the creaking and grating of a cartwheel: "*Chi abbaratta—baratta—b'ratta—chi abbaratta cenci e vetri—b'ratta ferri vecchi?*" *

"It's worth but little," he said presently, relapsing into his conversational tone. "Hose and altogether, your clothes are worth but little. Still, if you've a mind to set yourself up with a lute worth more than any new one, or with a sword that's been worn by a Ridolfi, or with a pater-noster of the best mode, I could let you have a great bargain, by making an allowance for the clothes; for simple as I stand here, I've got the best-furnished shop in the Ferravecchi, and it's close by the Mercato. The Virgin be praised! it's not a pumpkin I carry on my shoulders. But I don't stay caged in my shop all day: I've got a wife and a raven to stay at home and mind the stock. *Chi abbaratta—baratta—b'ratta?* * * * And now, young man, where do you come from, and what's your business in Florence?"

* "Who wants to exchange rags, broken glass, or old iron?"

"I thought you liked nothing that came to you without a bargain," said the stranger. "You've offered me nothing yet in exchange for that information."

"Well, well; a Florentine doesn't mind bidding a fair price for news: it stays the stomach a little, though he may win no hose by it. If I take you to the prettiest damsel in the Mercato to get a cup of milk—that will be a fair bargain."

"Nay; I can find her myself, if she be really in the Mercato; for pretty heads are apt to look forth of doors and windows. No, no. Besides a sharp trader, like you, ought to know that he who bids for nuts and news, may chance to find them hollow."

"Ah! young man," said Bratti, with a sideway glance of some admiration, "You were not born of a Sunday—the salt-shops were open when you came into the world. You're not a Hebrew, eh?—come from Spain or Naples, eh? Let me tell you the Frati Minori are trying to make Florence as hot as Spain for those dogs of hell that want to get all the profit of usury to themselves and leave none for Christians; and when you walk the Calimara with a piece of yellow cloth in your cap, it will spoil your beauty more than a sword-cut across that smooth olive cheek of yours.—*Abbaratta, baratta—chi abbaratta?*—I tell you, young man, gray cloth is against yellow cloth; and there's as much gray cloth in Florence as would make a gown and cowl for the Duomo, and there's not so much yellow cloth as would make hose for Saint Christopher—blessed be his name, and send me a sight of him this day!—*Abbaratta, baratta, b'ratta—chi abbaratta?*"

"All that is very amusing information you are parting with for nothing," said the stranger, rather scornfully; but it happens not to concern me. I am no Hebrew."

"See, now!" said Bratti, triumphantly; I've made a good bargain with mere words. I've made you tell me something, young man, though you're as hard to hold as a lamprey. San Giovanni be praised! a blind Florentine is a match for two one-eyed men. But here we are in the Mercato."

They had now emerged from the narrow streets into a broad piazza, known to the elder Florentine writers as the Mercato Vecchio, or the old Market. This piazza, though it had been the scene of a provision-market from time immemorial, and may, perhaps, says fond imagination, be the very spot to which the Fesulean ancestors of the Flor-

entines descended from their high fastness to traffic with the rustic population of the valley, had not been shunned as a place of residence by Florentine wealth. In the early decades of the fifteenth century, which was now near its end, the Medici and other powerful families of the *popolani grassi*, or commercial nobility, had their houses there, not perhaps finding their ears much offended by the loud roar of mingled dialects, or their eyes much shocked by the butchers' stalls, which the old poet Antonio Pucci accounts a chief glory, or *dignità*, of a market that, in his esteem, eclipsed the markets of all the earth besides. But the glory of mutton and veal (well attested to be the flesh of the right animals; for were not the skins, with the heads attached duly displayed, according to the decree of the Signoria?) was just now wanting to the Mercato, the time of Lent not being yet over. The proud corporation, or "Art," of butchers was in abeyance, and it was the great harvest-time of the market-gardeners, the cheesemongers, the venders of macaroni, corn, eggs, milk, and dried fruits: a change which was apt to make the women's voices predominant in the chorus. But in all seasons there was the experimental ringing of pots and pans, the clinking of the money-changers, the tempting offers of cheapness at the old-clothes stalls, the challenges of the dicers, the vaunting of new linens and woollens, of excellent wooden-ware, kettles, and frying-pans; there was the choking of the narrow inlets with mules and carts together with much uncomplimentary remonstrance in terms remarkably identical with the insults in use by the gentler sex of the present day, under the same imbrowning and heating circumstances. Ladies and gentlemen, who came to market, looked on at a larger amount of amateur fighting than could easily be seen in these later times, and beheld more revolting rags, beggary, and rascaldom, than modern householders could well picture to themselves. As the day wore on, the hideous drama of the gaming-house might be seen here by any chance open-air spectator—the quivering eagerness, the blank despair, the sobs, the blasphemy, and the blows:—

"E vedesi chi perde con gran soffi,
E bestemmiar colla mano alla mascella,
E ricever e dar di molti ingoffi."

But still there was the relief of prettier sights: there were brood-rabbits, not less innocent and astonished than those of our own period; there were doves and singing-

birds to be bought as presents for the children; there were even kittens for sale, and here and there a handsome *gattuccio*, or "Tom," with the highest character for mousing; and, better than all; there were young, softly-rounded cheeks and bright eyes, freshened by the start from the far-off castello* at daybreak, not to speak of older faces with the unfading charm of honest goodwill in them, such as are never quite wanting in scenes of human industry. And high on a pillar in the center of the place—a venerable pillar, fetched from the church of San Giovanni—stood Donatello's stone statue of Plenty, with a fountain near it, where, says old Pucci, the good wives of the market freshened their utensils, and their throats also; not because they were unable to buy wine, but because they wished to save the money for their husbands.

But on this particular morning a sudden change seemed to have come over the face of the market. The *deschi*, or stalls, were indeed partly dressed with their various commodities, and already there were purchasers assembled, on the alert to secure the finest, freshest vegetables and the most unexceptionable butter. But when Bratti and his companion entered the piazza, it appeared that some common preoccupation had for the moment distracted the attention both of buyers and sellers from their proper business. Most of the traders had turned their backs on their goods, and had joined the knots of talkers who were concentrating themselves at different points in the piazza. A vendor of old clothes, in the act of hanging out a pair of long hose, had distractedly hung them round his neck in his eagerness to join the nearest group; an oratorical cheesemonger, with a piece of cheese in one hand and a knife in the other, was incautiously making notes of his emphatic pauses on that excellent specimen of *marzolino*; and elderly market-women, with their egg-baskets in a dangerously oblique position, contributed a wailing fugue invocation.

In this general distraction, the Florentine boys, who were never wanting in any street scene, and were of an especially mischievous sort—as who should say, very sour crabs indeed—saw a great opportunity. Some made a rush at the nuts and dried figs, others preferred the farinaceous delicacies at the cooked provision stalls—delicacies to which certain four-footed dogs also, who had learned to take kindly to Lenten fare, applied a discriminating nostril,

* Walled village.

and then disappeared with much rapidity under the nearest shelter; while the mules, not without some kicking and plunging among impeding baskets, were stretching their muzzles toward the aromatic green-meat.

"Diavolo!" said Bratti, as he and his companion came, quite unnoticed upon the noisy scene; "the Mercato is gone as mad as if the most Holy Father had excommunicated us again. I must know what this is. But never fear: it seems a thousand years to you till you see the pretty Tessa, and get your cup of milk; but keep hold of me, and I'll hold to my bargain. Remember, I'm to have the first bid for your suit, specially for the hose, which, with all their stains, are the best *panno di garbo*—as good as ruined, though, with mud and weather stains."

"Olà, Monna Trecca," Bratti proceeded, turning toward an old woman on the outside of the nearest group, who for the moment had suspended her wail to listen, and shouting close in her ear: "Here are the mules upsetting all your bunches of parsley: is the world coming to an end, then?"

"Monna Trecca" (equivalent to "Dame Greengrocer") turned round at this unexpected trumpeting in her right ear, with a half-fierce, half-bewildered look, first at the speaker, then at her disarranged commodities, and then at the speaker again.

"A bad Easter and a bad year to you, and may you die by the sword!" she burst out, rushing toward her stall, but directing this first volley of her wrath against Bratti, who, without heeding the malediction, quietly slipped into her place, within hearing of the narrative which had been absorbing her attention; making a sign at the same time to the young stranger to keep near him.

"I tell you I saw it myself," said a fat man, with a bunch of newly-purchased leeks in his hand. "I was in Santa Maria Novella, and saw it myself. The woman started up and threw out her arms, and cried out and said she saw a big bull with fiery horns coming down on the church to crush it. I saw it myself."

"Saw what, Goro?" said a man of slim figure, whose eye twinkled rather roguishly. He wore a close jerkin, a skull-cap lodged carelessly over his left ear as if it had fallen there by chance, a delicate linen apron tucked up on one side, and a razor stuck in his belt. "Saw the bull, or only the woman?"

"Why, the woman, to be sure; but it's all one, *mi pare* :

it doesn't alter the meaning—*va!*” answered the fat man, with some contempt.

“Meaning? no, no; that's clear enough,” said several voices at once, and then followed a confusion of tongues, in which “Lights shooting over San Lorenzo for three nights altogether”—“Thunder in the clear starlight”—“Lantern of the Duomo struck with the sword of St. Michael”—“*Palle*”*—“All smashed”—“Lions tearing each other to pieces”—“Ah! and they might well”—“*Boto† caduto in Santissima Nunziata!*”—“Died like the best of Christians”—“God will have pardoned him”—were often-repeated phrases, which shot across each other like storm-driven hailstones, each speaker feeling rather the necessity of utterance than of finding a listener. Perhaps the only silent members of the group were Bratti, who, as a new-comer, was busy in mentally piecing together the flying fragments of information; the man of the razor; and a thin-lipped, eager-looking personage in spectacles, wearing a pen-and-ink case at his belt.

“*Ebbene*, Nello,” said Bratti, skirting the group till he was within hearing of the barber. “It appears the Magnifico is dead—rest his soul!—and the price of wax will rise?”

“Even as you say,” answered Nello; and then added, with an air of extra gravity, but with marvelous rapidity, “and his waxen image in the Nunziata fell at the same moment, they say; or at some other time, whenever it pleases the Frati Serviti, who know best. And several cows and women have had still-born calves this Quaresima; and for the bad eggs that have been broken since the Carnival, nobody has counted them. Ah! a great man—a great politician—a greater poet than Dante. And yet the cupola didn't fall, only the lantern. *Che miracolo!*”

A sharp and lengthened “Pst!” was suddenly heard darting across the pelting storm of gutturals. It came from the pale man in spectacles, and had the effect he intended; for the noise ceased, and all eyes in the group were fixed on him with a look of expectation.

“’Tis well said you Florentines are blind,” he began, in an incisive high voice. “It appears to me, you need nothing but a diet of hay to make cattle of you. What! do you think the death of Lorenzo is the scourge God has

* Arms of the Medici.

† A votive image of Lorenzo, in wax, hung up in the church of the Annunziata, supposed to have fallen at the time of his death. *Boto* is popular Tuscan for *Voto*.

prepared for Florence? Go! you are sparrows chattering praise over the dead hawk. What! a man who was trying to slip a noose over every neck in the Republic that he might tighten at his pleasure! You like that; you like to have the election of your magistrates turned into closet-work, and no man to use the rights of a citizen unless he is a medicean. That is what is meant by qualification now: *netto di specchio** no longer means that a man pays his dues to the Republic: it means that he'll wink at robbery of the people's money—at robbery of their daughters' dowries; that he'll play the chamberer and the philosopher by turns—listen to bawdy songs at the Carnival and cry 'Bellissimi!'—and listen to sacred lauds and cry again 'Bellissimi!' But this is what you love: you grumble and raise a riot over your *quattrini bianchi*" (white farthings); "but you take no notice when the public treasury has got a hole in the bottom for the gold to run into Lorenzo's drains. You like to pay for footmen to walk before and behind one of your citizens, that he may be affable and condescending to you. 'See what a tall Pisan we keep,' say you, 'to march before him with the drawn sword flashing in our eyes!—and yet Lorenzo smiles at us. What goodness!' And you think the death of a man, who would soon have saddled and bridled you as the Sforza saddled and bridled Milan—you think his death is the scourge God is warning you of by portents. I tell you there is another sort of scourge in the air."

"Nay, nay, Ser Cioni, keep astride your politics, and never mount your prophecy; politics is the better horse," said Nello. "But if you talk of portents, what portent can be greater than a pious notary? Balaam's ass was nothing to it."

"Ay, but a notary out of work, with his inkbottle dry," said another bystander, very much out at elbows. "Better don a cowl at once, Ser Cioni; everybody will believe in your fasting."

The notary turned and left the group with a look of indignant contempt, disclosing, as he did so, the sallow but mild face of a short man who had been standing behind him, and whose bent shoulders told of some sedentary occupation.

"By San Giovanni, though," said the fat purchaser of leeks, with the air of a person rather shaken in his theories,

* The phrase used to express the absence of disqualification—i.e., the not being entered as a debtor in the public book (*specchio*).

"I am not sure there isn't some truth in what Ser Cioni says. For I know I have good reason to find fault with the *quattrini bianchi* myself. Grumble, did he say? Suffocation! I should think we do grumble; and let anybody say the word, I'll turn out into the piazza with the readiest, sooner than have our money altered in our hands as if the magistracy were so many necromancers. And it's true Lorenzo might have hindered such work if he would—and for the bull with the flaming horns, why, as Ser Cioni says, there may be many meanings to it, for the matter of that; it may have more to do with the taxes than we think. For when God above sends a sign, it's not to be supposed he'd have only one meaning."

"Spoken like an oracle, Goro!" said the barber. "Why, when we poor mortals can pack two or three meanings into one sentence, it were mere blasphemy not to believe that your miraculous bull means everything that any man in Florence likes it to mean."

"Thou art pleased to scoff, Nello," said the sallow, round-shouldered man, no longer eclipsed by the notary, "but it is not the less true that every revelation, whether by visions, dreams, portents, or the written word, has many meanings, which it is given to the illuminated only to unfold."

"Assuredly," answered Nello. "Haven't I been to hear the Frate in San Lorenzo? But then, I've been to hear Fra Menico in the Duomo, too; and according to him, your Fra Girolama, with his visions and interpretations, is running after the wind of Mongibello, and those who follow him are like to have the fate of certain swine that ran headlong into the sea—or some hotter place. With San Domenico roaring *è vero* in one ear, and San Francisco screaming *è falso* in the other, what is a poor barber to do—unless he were illuminated? But it's plain our Goro here is beginning to be illuminated, for he already sees that the bull with the flaming horns means first himself, and secondly all the other aggrieved taxpayers of Florence, who are determined to gore the magistracy on the first opportunity."

"Goro is a fool!" said a bass voice, with a note that dropped like the sound of a great bell in the midst of much tinkling. "Let him carry home his leeks and shake his flanks over his wool-beating. He'll mend matters more that way than by showing his tun-shaped body in the piazza, as if everybody might measure his grievances by the

size of his paunch. 'The burdens that harm him most are his heavy carcass and his idleness.'

The speaker had joined the group only in time to hear the conclusion of Nello's speech, but he was one of those figures for whom all the world instinctively makes way, as it would for a battering-ram. He was not much above the middle height, but the impression of enormous force which was conveyed by his capacious chest and brawny arms bared to the shoulder, was deepened by the keen sense and quiet resolution expressed in his glance and in every furrow of his cheek and brow. He had often been an unconscious model to Domenico Ghirlandajo, when that great painter was making the walls of the churches reflect the life of Florence, and translating pale aerial traditions into the deep color and strong lines of the faces he knew. The naturally dark tint of his skin was additionally bronzed by the same powdery deposit that gave a polished black surface to his leathern apron: a deposit which habit had probably made a necessary condition of perfect ease, for it was not washed off with punctilious regularity.

Goro turned his fat cheek and glassy eye on the frank speaker with a look of deprecation rather than of resentment.

"Why, Niccolò," he said, in an injured tone, "I've heard you sing to another tune than that, often enough, when you've been laying down the law at San Gallo on a festa. I've heard you say yourself, that a man wasn't a mill-wheel, to be on the grind, grind, as long as he was driven, and then stick in his place without stirring when the water was low. And you're as fond of your vote as any man in Florence—ay, and I've heard you say, if Lorenzo——"

"Yes, yes," said Niccolò. "Don't you be bringing up my speeches again after you've swallowed them, and handing them about as if they were none the worse. I vote and I speak when there's any use in it: if there's hot metal on the anvil, I lose no time before I strike; but I don't spend good hours in tinkling on cold iron, or in standing on the pavement as thou dost, Goro, with snout upward, like a pig under an oak-tree. And as for Lorenzo—dead and gone before this time—he was a man who had an eye for curious iron-work; and if anybody says he wanted to make himself a tyrant, I say, '*Sia*! I'll not deny which way the wind blows when every man can see the weather-cock.' But that only means that Lorenzo was a crested

hawk, and there are plenty of hawks without crests whose claws and beaks are as good for tearing. Though if there was any chance of a real reform, so that Marzocco* might shake his name and roar again, instead of dipping his head to lick the feet of anybody that will mount and ride him, I'd strike a good blow for it."

"And that reform is not far off, Niccolò," said the sal-low, mild-faced man, seizing his opportunity like a missionary among the too light-minded heathens; "for a time of tribulation is coming, and the scourge is at hand. And when the church is purged of cardinals and prelates who traffic in her inheritance that their hands may be full to pay the price of blood and satisfy their own lusts, the State will be purged too—and Florence will be purged of men who love to see avarice and lechery under the red hat and the mitre because it gives them the screen of a more hellish vice than their own."

"Ay, as Goro's broad body would be a screen for my narrow person in case of missiles," said Nello; "but if that excellent screen happened to fall, I were stifled under it, surely enough. That is no bad image of thine, Nanni—or, rather, of the Frate's; for I fancy there is no room in the small cup of thy understanding for any other liquor than what he pours into it."

"And it were well for thee, Nello," replied Nanni, "if thou couldst empty thyself of thy scoffs and thy jests, and take in that liquor too. The warning is ringing in the ears of all men: and it's no new story; for the Abbot Joachim prophesied of the coming time three hundred years ago, and now Fra Girolamo has got the message afresh. He has seen it in a vision, even as the prophets of old: he has seen the sword hanging from the sky."

"Ay, and thou wilt see it thyself, Nanni, if thou wilt stare upward long enough," said Niccolò; "for that pitiable tailor's work of thine makes thy noddle so overhang thy legs that thy eyeballs can see naught above the stitching-board but the roof of thy own skull."

The honest tailor bore the jest without bitterness, bent on convincing his hearers of his doctrine rather than of his dignity. But Niccolò gave him no opportunity for replying; for he turned away to the pursuit of his market business, probably considering further dialogue as a tinkling on cold iron.

"*Ebbene*," said the man with the hose around his neck,

* The stone Lion, emblem of the Republic.

who had lately migrated from another knot of talkers, "they are safest who cross themselves and jest at nobody. Do you know that the Magnifico sent for the Frate at the last, and couldn't die without his blessing?"

"Was it so—in truth?" said several voices. "Yes, yes—God will have pardoned him." "He died like the best of Christians." "Never took his eyes from the holy crucifix."

"And the Frate will have given him his blessing?"

"Well, I know no more," said he of the hosen; "only Guccio there met a footman going back to Careggi, and he told him the Frate had been sent for yesternight, after the Magnifico had confessed and had the holy sacraments."

"It's likely enough the Frate will tell the people something about it in his sermon this morning; is it not true, Nanni?" said Goro. "What do you think?"

But Nanni had already turned his back on Goro, and the group was rapidly thinning; some being stirred by the impulse to go and hear "new things" from the Frate ("new things" were the nectar of Florentines); others by the sense that it was time to attend to their private business. In this general movement, Bratti got close to the barber, and said—

"Nello, you've a ready tongue of your own, and are used to worming secrets out of people when you've once got them well lathered. I picked up a stranger this morning as I was coming in from Rovizzano, and I can spell him out no better than I can the letters on that scarf I bought from the French Cavalier. It isn't my wits are at fault,—I want no man to help me tell peas from paternosters,—but when you come to foreign fashions, a fool may happen to know more than a wise man."

"Ay, thou hast the wisdom of Midas, who could turn rags and rusty nails into gold, even as thou dost," said Nello, "and he had something of the ass about him. But where is thy bird of strange plumage?"

Bratti was looking round, with an air of disappointment.

"Diavolo!" he said, with some vexation. "The bird's flown. It's true he was hungry, and I forgot him. But we shall find him in the Mercato, within scent of bread and savors, I'll answer for him."

"Let us make the round of the Mercato then," said Nello.

"It isn't his feathers that puzzle me," continued Bratti, as they pushed their way together. "There isn't much in

the way of cut and cloth on this side the Holy Sepulchre that can puzzle a Florentine."

"Or frighten him, either," said Nello, "after he has seen an Englander or a German."

"No, no," said Bratti, cordially; "one may never lose sight of the Cupola and yet know the world, I hope. Besides, this stranger's clothes are good Italian merchandise, and the hose he wears were dyed in Ognissanti before ever they were dyed with salt water, as he says. But the riddle about him is——"

Here Bratti's explanation was interrupted by some jostling as they reached one of the entrances of the piazza. and before he could resume it they had caught sight of the enigmatical object they were in search of.

CHAPTER II.

BREAKFAST FOR LOVE.

AFTER Bratti had joined the knot of talkers, the young stranger, hopeless of learning what was the cause of the general agitation, and not much caring to know what was probably of little interest to any but born Florentines, soon became tired of waiting for Bratti's escort; and chose to stroll round the piazza, looking out for some vender of eatables who might happen to have less than the average curiosity about public news. But as if at the suggestion of a sudden thought, he thrust his hand into a purse or wallet that hung at his waist, and explored it again and again with a look of frustration.

"Not an obolus, by Jupiter!" he murmured, in a language which was not Tuscan or even Italian. "I thought I had one poor piece left. I must get my breakfast for love, then!"

He had not gone many steps farther before it seemed likely that he had found a quarter of the market where that medium of exchange might not be rejected.

In a corner, away from any group of talkers, two mules were standing, well adorned with red tassels and collars. One of them carried wooden milk vessels, the other a pair of panniers filled with herbs and salads. Resting her elbow on the neck of the mule that carried milk, there

leaned a young girl, apparently not more than sixteen, with a red hood surrounding her face, which was all the more baby-like in its prettiness from the entire concealment of her hair. The poor child, perhaps, was weary after her labor in the morning twilight in preparation for her walk to market from some castello three or four miles off, for she seemed to have gone to sleep in that half-standing, half-leaning posture. Nevertheless, our stranger had no compunction in awaking her; but the means he chose were so gentle, that it seemed to the damsel in her dream as if a little sprig of thyme had touched her lips while she was stooping to gather the herbs. The dream was broken, however, for she opened her blue baby-eyes, and started up with astonishment and confusion to see the young stranger standing close before her. She heard him speaking to her in a voice which seemed so strange and soft, that even if she had been more collected she would have taken it for granted that he said something hopelessly unintelligible to her, and her first movement was to turn her head a little away, and lift up a corner of her green serge mantle as a screen. He repeated his words—

“Forgive me, pretty one, for awaking you. I’m dying with hunger, and the scent of milk makes breakfast seem more desirable than ever.”

He had chosen the words “*muoio di fame*,” because he knew they would be familiar to her ears; and he had uttered them playfully, with the intonation of a mendicant. This time he was understood; the corner of the mantle was dropped, and in a few moments a large cup of fragrant milk was held out to him. He paid no further compliments before raising it to his lips, and while he was drinking the little maiden found courage to look up at the long dark curls of this singular-voiced stranger, who had asked for food in the tones of a beggar, but who, though his clothes were much damaged, was unlike any beggar she had ever seen.

While this process of survey was going on, there was another current of feeling that carried her hand into a bag which hung by the side of the mule, and when the stranger set down his cup he saw a large piece of bread held out toward him, and caught a glance of the blue eyes that seemed intended as an encouragement to him to take this additional gift.

“But perhaps that is your own breakfast,” he said. “No,

I have had enough without payment. A thousand thanks, my gentle one."

There was no rejoinder in words; but the piece of bread was pushed a little nearer to him, as if in impatience at his refusal; and as the long dark eyes of the stranger rested on the baby-face, it seemed to be gathering more and more courage to look up and meet them.

"Ah, then, if I must take the bread," he said, laying his hand on it, "I shall get bolder still, and beg for another kiss to make the bread sweeter."

His speech was getting wonderfully intelligible in spite of the strange voice, which had at first almost seemed a thing to make her cross herself. She blushed deeply, and lifted up a corner of her mantle to her mouth again. But just as the too presumptuous stranger was leaning forward, and had his fingers on the arm that held up the screening mantle, he was startled by a harsh voice close upon his ear.

"Who are *you*—with a murrain to you? No honest buyer, I'll warrant, but a hanger-on of the dicers—or something worse. Go! dance off, and find fitter company, or I'll give you a tune to a little quicker time than you'll like."

The young stranger drew back and looked at the speaker with a glance provokingly free from alarm and deprecation, and his slight expression of saucy amusement broke into a broad beaming smile as he surveyed the figure of his threatener. She was a stout but brawny woman, with a man's jerkin slipped over her green serge gamurra or gown, and the peaked hood of some departed mantle fastened round her sun-burnt face, which, under all its coarseness and premature wrinkles, showed a half-sad, half-ludicrous maternal resemblance to the tender baby-face of the little maiden—the sort of resemblance which often seems a more croaking, shudder-creating prophecy than that of the death's-head.

There was something irresistibly propitiating in that bright young smile, but Monna Ghita was not a woman to betray any weakness, and she went on speaking, apparently with heightened exasperation.

"Yes, yes, you can grin as well as other monkeys in cap and jerkin. You're a minstrel or a mountebank, I'll be sworn; you look for all the world as silly as a tumbler when he's been upside down and has got on his heels again. And what fool's tricks hast thou been after, Tessa?" she

added, turning to her daughter, whose frightened face was more inviting to abuse. "Giving away the milk and victuals, it seems; ay, ay, thou'dst carry water in thy ears for any idle vagabond that didn't like to stoop for it, thou silly staring rabbit! Turn thy back, and lift the herbs out of the panniers, else I'll make thee say a few Aves without counting."

"Nay, Madonna," said the stranger, with a pleading smile, "don't be angry with your pretty Tessa for taking pity on a hungry traveler, who found himself unexpectedly without a quattrino. Your handsome face looks so well when it frowns, that I long to see it illuminated by a smile."

"*Va, via!* I know what paste you are made of. You may tickle me with that straw a good long while before I shall laugh, I can tell you. Get along, with a bad Easter! else I'll make a beauty-spot or two on that face of yours that shall spoil your kissing on this side Advent."

As Monna Ghita lifted her formidable talons by way of complying with the first and last requisite of eloquence, Bratti, who had come up a minute or two before, had been saying to his companion, "What think you of this pretty parrot, Nello? Doesn't his tongue smack of Venice?"

"Nay, Bratti," said the barber in an undertone, "thy wisdom has much of the ass in it, as I told thee just now; especially about the ears. This stranger is a Greek, else I'm not the barber who has had the sole and exclusive shaving of the excellent Demetrio, and drawn more than one sorry tooth from his learned jaw. And this youth might be taken to have come straight from Olympus—at least when he has had a touch of my razor."

"*Orsù!* Monna Ghita!" continued Nello, not sorry to see some sport; "what has happened to cause such a thunderstorm? Has this young stranger been misbehaving himself?"

"By San Giovanni!" said the cautious Bratti, who had not shaken off his original suspicions concerning the shabbily-clad possessor of jewels, "he did right to run away from *me*, if he meant to get into mischief. I can swear that I found him under the Loggia de Cerchi, with a ring on his finger such as I've seen worn by Bernardo Rucellai himself. Not another rusty nail's worth do I know about him."

"The fact is," said Nello, eyeing the stranger good-humoredly, "this *bello giovane* has been a little too pre-

sumptuous in admiring the charms of Monna Ghita, and has attempted to kiss her while her daughter's back is turned; for I observe that the pretty Tessa is too busy to look this way at present. Was it not so, Messer?" Nello concluded in a tone of courtesy.

"You have divined the offense like a soothsayer," said the stranger, laughingly. "Only that I had not the good fortune to find Monna Ghita here at first. I begged a cup of milk from her daughter, and had accepted this gift of bread, for which I was making a humble offering of gratitude, before I had the higher pleasure of being face to face with these riper charms which I was perhaps too bold in admiring."

"*Va, va!* be off, every one of you, and stay in purgatory till I pay to get you out, will you?" said Monna Ghita, fiercely, elbowing Nello, and leading forward her mule so as to compel the stranger to jump aside. "Tessa, thou simpleton, bring forward thy mule a bit: the cart will be upon us."

As Tessa turned to take the mule's bridle, she cast one timid glance at the stranger, who was now moving with Nello out of the way of an approaching market-cart; and the glance was just long enough to seize the beckoning movement of his hand, which indicated that he had been watching for this opportunity of an adieu.

"*Ebbene*," said Bratti, raising his voice to speak across the cart; "I leave you with Nello, young man, for there's no pushing my bag and basket any farther, and I have business at home. But you'll remember our bargain, because if you found Tessa without me, it was not my fault. Nello will show you my shop in the Ferravecchi, and I'll not turn my back on you."

"A thousand thanks, friend!" said the stranger, laughing, and then turned away with Nello up the narrow street which led most directly to the Piazza del Duomo.

CHAPTER III.

THE BARBER'S SHOP.

"To tell you the truth," said the young stranger to Nello, as they got a little clearer of the entangled vehicles and mules, "I am not sorry to be handed over by that patron of mine to one who has a less barbarous accent, and a less enigmatical business. Is it a common thing among you Florentines for an itinerant trafficker in broken glass and rags to talk of a shop where he sells lutes and swords?"

"Common? No: our Bratti is not a common man. He has a theory, and lives up to it, which is more than I can say for any philosopher I have the honor of shaving," answered Nello, whose loquacity, like an over-full bottle, could never pour forth a small dose. "Bratti means to extract the utmost possible amount of pleasure, that is to say, of hard bargaining, out of this life; winding it up with a bargain for the easiest possible passage through purgatory, by giving Holy Church his winnings when the game is over. He has had his will made to that effect on the cheapest terms a notary could be got for. But I have often said to him, 'Bratti, thy bargain is a limping one, and thou art on the lame side of it. Does it not make thee a little sad to look at the pictures of the Paradiso? Thou wilt never be able there to chaffer for rags and rusty nails: the saints and angels want neither pins nor tinder; and except with San Bartolommeo, who carries his skin about in an inconvenient manner, I see no chance of thy making a bargain for second-hand clothing.' But God pardon me," added Nello, changing his tone, and crossing himself, "this light talk ill beseems a morning when Lorenzo lies dead, and the Muses are tearing their hair—always a painful thought to a barber; and you yourself, Messere, are probably under a cloud, for when a man of your speech and presence takes up with so sorry a night's lodging, it argues some misfortune to have befallen him."

"What Lorenzo is that whose death you speak of?" said the stranger, appearing to have dwelt with too anxious an interest on this point to have noticed the indirect inquiry that followed it.

What Lorenzo? There is out one Lorenzo, I imagine, whose death could throw the Mercato into an uproar, set the lantern of the Duomo leaping in desperation, and cause the lions of the Republic to feel under an immediate necessity to devour one another. I mean Lorenzo de Medici, the Pericles of our Athens—if I may make such a comparison in the ear of a Greek.”

“Why not?” said the other, laughingly; “for I doubt whether Athens, even in the days of Pericles, could have produced so learned a barber.”

“Yes, yes; I thought I could not be mistaken,” said the rapid Nello, “else I have shaved the venerable Demetrio Calcondila to little purpose; but pardon me, I am lost in wonder: your Italian is better than his, though he has been in Italy forty years—better even than that of the accomplished Marullo, who may be said to have married the Italic Muse in more senses than one, since he has married our learned and lovely Alessandra Scala.”

“It will lighten your wonder to know that I come of a Greek stock planted in Italian soil much longer than the mulberry-trees which have taken so kindly to it. I was born at Bari, and my—I mean, I was brought up by an Italian—and, in fact, I am a Greek, very much as your peaches are Persian. The Greek dye was subdued in me, I suppose, till I have been dipped over again by long abode and much travel in the land of gods and heroes. And, to confess something of my private affairs to you, this same Greek dye, with a few ancient gems I have about me, is the only fortune shipwreck has left me. But—when the towers fall, you know it is an ill business for the small nest-builders—the death of your Pericles makes me wish I had rather turned my steps toward Rome, as I should have done but for a fallacious Minerva in the shape of an Augustinian monk. ‘At Rome,’ he said, ‘you will be lost in a crowd of hungry scholars; but at Florence, every corner is penetrated by the sunshine of Lorenzo’s patronage: Florence is the best market in Italy for such commodities as yours.’”

“*Gnaffè*, and so it will remain, I hope,” said Nello. “Lorenzo was not the only patron and judge of learning in our city—heaven forbid! Because he was a large melon every other Florentine is not a pumpkin, I suppose. Have we not Bernardo Rucellai and Alamanno Rinuccini, and plenty more? And if you want to be informed on such matters, I, Nello, am your man. It seems to me a thousand

years till I can be of service to a *bel erudito* like yourself. And, first of all, in the matter of your hair. That beard, my fine young man, must be parted with, were it as dear to you as the nymph of your dreams. Here at Florence, we love not to see a man with his nose projecting over a cascade of hair. But, remember, you will have passed the rubicon, when once you have been shaven: if you repent, and let your beard grow after it has acquired stoutness by a struggle with the razor, your mouth will by-and-by show no longer what Messer Angelo calls the divine prerogative of lips, but will appear like a dark cavern fringed with horrent brambles."

"That is a terrible prophecy," said the Greek, "especially if your Florentine maidens are many of them as pretty as the little Tessa I stole a kiss from this morning."

"Tessa? she is a rough-handed *contadina*: you will rise into the favor of dames who bring no scent of the mule-stables with them. But to that end, you must not have the air of a *sgherro*, or a man of evil repute: you must look like a courtier, and a scholar of the more polished sort, such as our Pietro Crinito, like one who sins among well-bred, well-fed people, and not one who sucks down vile *vino di sotto* in a chance tavern."

"With all my heart," said the stranger. "If the Florentine Graces demand it, I am willing to give up this small matter of my beard, but ——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Nello. "I know what you would say. It is the *bella zazzera*—the hyacinthine locks, you do not choose to part with; and there is no need. Just a little pruning—*ecco!*—and you will look not unlike the illustrious prince Pico di Mirandola in his prime. And here we are in good time in the Piazza San Giovanni, and at the door of my shop. But you are pausing, I see: naturally, you want to look at our wonder of the world, our Duomo, our Santa Maria del Fiore. Well, well, a mere glance; but I beseech you to leave a closer survey till you have been shaved: I am quivering with the inspiration of my art even to the very edge of my razor. Ah, then, come round this way."

The mercurial barber seized the arm of the stranger, and led him to a point, on the south side of the piazza, from which he could see at once the huge dark shell of the cupola, the slender soaring grace of Giotto's campanile, and the quaint octagon of San Giovanni in front of them, showing its unique gates of storied bronze, which still bore

the somewhat dimmed glory of their original gilding. The inlaid marbles were then fresher in their pink, and white, and purple, than they are now, when the winters of four centuries have turned their white to the rich ochre of well-mellowed meerschaum; the facade of the cathedral did not stand ignominious in faded stucco, but had upon it the magnificent promise of the half-completed marble inlaying and statued riches, which Giotto had devised a hundred and fifty years before; and as the campanile in all its harmonious variety of color and from led the eyes upward, high into the clear air of this April morning, it seemed a prophetic symbol, telling that human life must somehow and some time shape itself into accord with that pure aspiring beauty.

But this was not the impression it appeared to produce on the Greek. His eyes were irresistibly led upward, but as he stood with his arms folded and his curls falling backward, there was a slight touch of scorn on his lips, and when his eyes fell again they glanced round with a scanning coolness which was rather piquing to Nello's Florentine spirit.

"Well, my fine young man," he said, with some impatience, "you seem to make as little of our Cathedral as if you were the Angel Gabriel come straight from Paradise. I should like to know if you have ever seen finer work than our Giotto's tower, or any cupola that would not look a mere mushroom by the side of Brunelleschi's there, or any marbles finer or more cunningly wrought than these that our Signoria got from far-off quarries, at a price that would buy a dukedom. Come, now, have you ever seen anything to equal them?"

"If you asked me that question with a scimitar at my throat, after the Turkish fashion, or even your own razor," said the young Greek, smiling gaily, and moving on toward the gates of the Baptistery, "I dare say you might get a confession of the true faith from me. But with my throat free from peril, I venture to tell you that your buildings smack too much of Christian barbarism for my taste. I have a shuddering sense of what there is inside—hideous smoked Madonnas; fleshless saints in mosaic, staring down idiotic astonishment and rebuke from the apse; skin-clad skeletons hanging on crosses, or stuck all over with arrows, or stretched on gridirons; women and monks with heads aside in perpetual lamentation. I have seen enough of those wry-necked favorites

of heaven at Constantinople. But what is this bronze door rough with imagery? These women's figures seem moulded in a different spirit from those starved and starving saints I spoke of; these heads in high relief speak of a human mind within them, instead of looking like an index to perpetual spasms and colic."

"Yes, yes," said Nello, with some triumph. "I think we shall show you by-and-by that our Florentine art is not in a state of barbarism. These gates, my fine young man, were moulded half a century ago, by our Lorenzo Ghiberti, when he counted hardly so many years as you do."

"Ah, I remember," said the stranger, turning away, like one whose appetite for contemplation was soon satisfied. "I have heard that your Tuscan sculptors and painters have been studying the antique a little. But with monks for models, and the legends of mad hermits and martyrs for subjects, the vision of Olympus itself would be of small use to them."

"I understand," said Nello, with a significant shrug, as they walked along. "You are of the same mind as Michele Marullo, ay, and as Angelo Poliziano himself, in spite of his canonicate, when he relaxes himself a little in my shop after his lectures, and talks of the gods awaking from their long sleep and making the woods and streams vital once more. But he rails against the Roman scholars who want to make us all talk Latin again: 'My ears,' he says, 'are sufficiently flayed by the barbarisms of the learned, and if the vulgar are talk Latin I would as soon have been in Florence the day they took to beating all the kettles in the city because the bells were not enough to stay the wrath of the saints.' Ah, Messer Greco, if you want to know the flavor of our scholarship, you must frequent my shop: it is the focus of Florentine intellect, and in that sense the naval of the earth—as my great predecessor, Burchiello, said of *his* shop, on the more frivolous pretension that his street of the Calimara was the centre of our city. And here we are at the sign of 'Apollo and the Razor.' Apollo, you see, is bestowing the razor on the Triptolemus of our craft, the first reaper of beards, the sublime *Anonimo*, whose mysterious identity is indicated by a shadowy hand."

"I see thou hast had custom already, Sandro," continued Nello, addressing a solemn-looking dark-eyed youth, who made way for them on the threshold. "And now make all clear for this signor to sit down, And pre-

pare the finest-scented lather, for he has a learned and handsome chin."

"You have a pleasant little adytum there, I see," said the stranger, looking through a latticed screen which divided the shop from a room of about equal size, opening into a still smaller walled enclosure, where a few bays and laurels surrounded a stone Hermes. "I suppose your conclave of *eruditi* meets there?"

"There, and not less in my shop," said Nello, leading the way into the inner room, in which were some benches, a table, with one book in manuscript and one printed in capitals lying open upon it, a lute, a few oil-sketches, and a model or two of hands and ancient masks. "For my shop is a no less fitting haunt of the Muses, as you will acknowledge when you feel the sudden illumination of understanding and the serene vigor of inspiration that will come to you with a clear chin. Ah! you can make that lute discourse, I perceive. I, too, have some skill that way, though the serenata is useless when daylight discloses a visage like mine, looking no fresher than an apple that has stood the winter. But look at that sketch: it is a fancy of Piero de Cosimo's, a strange freakish painter, who says he saw it by long looking at a mouldy wall."

The sketch Nello pointed to represented three masks—one a drunken laughing Satyr, another a sorrowing Magdalen, and the third, which lay between them, the rigid, cold face of a Stoic: the masks rested obliquely on the lap of a little child, whose cherub features rose above them with something of the supernal promise in the gaze which painters had by that time learned to give to the Divine Infant.

"A symbolical picture, I see," said the young Greek, touching the lute while he spoke, so as to bring out a slight musical murmur. "The child, perhaps, is the Golden Age, wanting neither worship nor philosophy. And the Golden Age can always come back as long as men are born in the form of babies, and don't come into the world in cassock or furred mantle. Or, the child may mean the wise philosophy of Epicurus, removed alike from the gross, the sad, and the severe."

"Ah! everybody has his own interpretation for that picture," said Nello; "and if you ask Piero himself what he meant by it, he says his pictures are an appendix which Messer Domeneddio has been pleased to make to the universe, and if any man is in doubt what they mean, he

had better inquire of Holy Church. He has been asked to paint a picture after the sketch, but he puts his fingers to his ears and shakes his head at that; the fancy is past, he says—a strange animal, our Piero. But now all is ready for your initiation into the mysteries of the razor.”

“Mysteries they may well be called,” continued the barber, with rising spirits at the prospect of a long monologue, as he imprisoned the young Greek in the shroud-like shaving-cloth; “mysteries of Minerva and the Graces. I get the flower of men’s thoughts, because I seize them in the first moment after shaving. (Ah! you wince a little at the lather: it tends to the outlying limits of the nose, I admit.) And that is what makes the peculiar fitness of a barber’s shop to become a resort of wit and learning. For, look now at a druggist’s shop: there is a dull conclave at the sign of “The Moor,” that pretends to rival mine; but what sort of inspiration, I beseech you, can be got from the scent of nauseous vegetable decoctions?—to say nothing of the fact that you no sooner pass the threshold than you see a doctor of physic, like a gigantic spider disguised in fur and scarlet, waiting for his prey; or even see him blocking up the doorway seated on a bony hack, inspecting saliva. (Your chin a little elevated, if it please you: contemplate that angel who is blowing the trumpet at you from the ceiling. I had it painted expressly for the regulation of my clients’ chins.) Besides, your druggist, who herborises and decocts, is a man of prejudices: he has poisoned people according to a system, and is obliged to stand up for his system in order to justify the consequences. Now a barber can be dispassionate; the only thing he necessarily stands by is the razor, always providing he is not an author. That was the flaw in my great predecessor Burchiello: he was a poet, and had consequently a prejudice about his own poetry. I have escaped that; I saw very early that authorship is a narrowing business, in conflict with the liberal art of the razor, which demands an impartial affection for all men’s chins. Ecco, Messer! the outline of your chin and lip is clear as a maiden’s; and now fix your mind on a knotty question—ask yourself whether you are bound to spell Virgil with an *i* or an *e*, and say if you do not feel an unwonted clearness on the point. Only, if you decide for the *i*, keep it to yourself till your fortune is made, for the *e* hath the stronger following in Florence. Ah! I think I see a gleam of still quicker wit in your eye. I have it on the authority

of our young Niccolò Macchiavelli, himself keen enough to discern *il pelo nell' uovo*, as we say, and a great lover of delicate shaving, though his beard is hardly of two years' date, that no sooner do the hairs begin to push themselves, than he perceives a certain grossness of apprehension creeping over him."

"Suppose you let me look at myself," said the stranger, laughing. "The happy effect on my intellect is perhaps obstructed by a little doubt as to the effect on my appearance."

"Behold yourself in this mirror, then: it is a Venetian mirror from Murano, the true *nosce teipsum*, as I have named it, compared with which the finest mirror of steel or silver is mere darkness. See now, how by diligent shaving, the nether region of your face may preserve its human outline, instead of presenting no distinction from the physiognomy of a bearded owl or a Barbary ape. I have seen men whose beards have so invaded their cheeks, that one might have pitied them as the victims of a sad, brutalizing chastisement befitting our Dante's Inferno, if they had not seemed to strut with a strange triumph in their extravagant hairiness."

"It seems to me," said the Greek, still looking into the mirror, "that you have taken away some of my capital with your razor—I mean a year or two of age, which might have won me more ready credit for my learning. Under the inspection of a patron whose vision has grown somewhat dim, I shall have a perilous resemblance to a maiden of eighteen in the disguise of hose and jerkin."

"Not at all," said Nello, proceeding to clip the too extravagant curls; "your proportions are not those of a maiden. And for your age, I myself remember seeing Angelo Poliziano begin his lectures on the Latin language when he had a younger beard than yours: and between ourselves, his juvenile ugliness was not less signal than his precocious scholarship. Whereas you—no, no, your age is not against you; but between ourselves, let me hint to you that your being a Greek, though it be only an Apulian Greek, is not in your favor. Certain of our scholars hold that your Greek learning is but a wayside, degenerate plant until it has been transplanted into Italian brains, and that now there is such a plentiful crop of the superior quality, your native teachers are mere propagators of degeneracy. Ecco! your curls are now of the right proportion to neck and shoulders; rise, Messer, and I will free

you from the encumbrance of this cloth. *Gnaffè!* I almost advise you to retain the faded jerkin and hose a little longer; they give you the air of a fallen prince."

"But the question is," said the young Greek, leaning against the high back of a chair, and returning Nello's contemplative admiration with a look of inquiring anxiety; "the question is, in what quarter I am to carry my princely air, so as to rise from the said fallen condition. If your Florentine patrons of learning share this scholarly hostility to the Greeks, I see not how your city can be a hospitable refuge for me, as you seemed to say just now."

"*Pian piano*—not so fast," said Nello, sticking his thumbs into his belt and nodding to Sandro to restore order. "I will not conceal from you that there is a prejudice against Greeks among us; and though, as a barber unshorn by authorship, I share no prejudices, I must admit that the Greeks are not always such pretty youngsters as yourself: their erudition is often of an uncombed, unmannerly aspect, and encrusted with a barbarous utterance of Italian, that makes their converse hardly more euphonious than that of a Tedesco in a state of vinous loquacity. And then, again, excuse me—we Florentines have liberal ideas about speech, and consider that an instrument which can flatter and promise so cleverly as the tongue, must have been partly made for those purposes; and that truth is a riddle for eyes and wit to discover, which it were a mere spoiling of sport for the tongue to betray. Still we have our limits, beyond which we call dissimulation treachery. But it is said of the Greeks that their honesty begins at what is the hanging point with us, and that since the old Furies went to sleep, your Christian Greek is of so easy a conscience that he would make a stepping-stone of his father's corpse."

The flush on the stranger's face indicated what seemed so natural a movement of resentment, that the good-natured Nello hastened to atone for his want of reticence.

"Be not offended, *bel giovane*; I am but repeating what I hear in my shop; as you may perceive, my eloquence is simply the cream which I skim off my clients' talk. Heaven forbid I should fetter my impartiality by entertaining an opinion. And for that same scholarly objection to the Greeks," added Nello, in a more mocking tone, and with a significant grimace, "the fact is, you are heretics, Messer; jealousy has nothing to do with it: if you would just change your opinion about leaven, and alter your

Doxology a little, our Italian scholars would think it a thousand years till they could give up their chairs to you. Yes, yes; it is chiefly religious scruple, and partly also the authority of a great classic—Juvenal, is it not? He, I gather, had his bile as much stirred by the swarm of Greeks as our Messer Angelo, who is fond of quoting some passage about their incorrigible impudence—*audacia perditā*.”

“Pooh! the passage is a compliment,” said the Greek, who had recovered himself, and seemed wise enough to take the matter gaily—

“*Ingenium velox, audacia perditā, sermo
Promptus, et Isæo torrentior.*”

A rapid intellect and ready eloquence may carry off a little impudence.”

“Assuredly,” said Nello. “And since, as I see, you know Latin literature as well as Greek, you will not fall into the mistake of Giovanni Argiropulo, who ran full tilt against Cicero, and pronounced him all but a pumpkin-head. For, let me give you one bit of advice, young man; trust a barber who has shaved the best chins, and kept his eyes and ears open for twenty years: oil your tongue well when you talk of the ancient Latin writers, and give it an extra dip when you talk of the modern. A wise Greek may win favor among us; witness our excellent Demetrio, who is loved by many, and not hated immoderately even by the most renowned scholars.”

“I discern the wisdom of your advice so clearly,” said the Greek, with the bright smile which was continually lighting up the fine form and color of his young face, “that I will ask you for a little more. Who now, for example, would be the most likely patron for me? Is there a son of Lorenzo who inherits his tastes? Or is there any other wealthy Florentine especially addicted to purchasing antique gems? I have a fine Cleopatra cut in sardonyx, and one or two other intaglios and cameos, both curious and beautiful, worthy of being added to the cabinet of a prince. Happily, I had taken the precaution of fastening them within the lining of my doublet before I set out on my voyage. Moreover, I should like to raise a small sum for my present need on this ring of mine” (here he took out the ring and replaced it on his finger), “if you could recommend me to any honest trafficker.”

“Let us see, let us see,” said Nello, perusing the floor,

and walking up and down the length of his shop. "This is no time to apply to Piero de Medici, though he has the will to make such purchases if he could always spare the money; but I think it is another sort of Cleopatra that he covets most. — Yes, yes, I have it. What you want is a man of wealth, and influence, and scholarly tastes—not one of your learned porcupines, bristling all over with critical tests, but one whose Greek and Latin are of a comfortable laxity. And that man is Bartolomeo Scala, the secretary of our republic. He came to Florence as a poor adventurer himself—a miller's son—a 'branny monster,' as he has been nicknamed by our honey-lipped Poliziano, who agrees with him as well as my teeth agree with lemon-juice. And, by the by, that may be a reason why the secretary may be the more ready to do a good turn to a strange scholar. For, between you and me, *bel giovane*—trust a barber who has shaved the best scholars—friendliness is much such a steed as Ser Benghi's: it will hardly show much alacrity unless it has got the thistle of hatred under its tail. However, the secretary is a man who'll keep his word to you, even to the halving of a fennel-seed; and he is not unlikely to buy some of your gems."

"But how am I to get at this great man?" said the Greek, rather impatiently.

"I was coming to that," said Nello. "Just now everybody of any public importance will be full of Lorenzo's death, and a stranger may find it difficult to get any notice. But in the meantime, I could take you to a man who, if he has a mind, can help you to a chance of a favorable interview with Scala sooner than anybody else in Florence—worth seeing for his own sake too, to say nothing of his collections, or of his daughter Romola, who is as fair as the Florentine lily before it got quarrelsome and turned red."

"But if this father of the beautiful Romola makes collections, why should he not like to buy some of my gems himself?"

Nello shrugged his shoulders. "For two good reasons—want of sight to look at the gems, and want of money to pay for them. Our old Bardo de Bardi is so blind that he can see no more of his daughter than, as he says, a glimmering of something bright when she comes very near him: doubtless her golden hair, which, as Messer Luigi Pulci says of his Meridiana's, '*raggia come stella per*

sereno.' Ah! here come some clients of mine, and I shouldn't wonder if one of them could serve your turn about that ring."

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

"GOOD-DAY, Messer Domenico," said Nello to the foremost of the two visitors who entered the shop, while he nodded silently to the other. "You come as opportunely as cheese or macaroni. Ah! you are in haste—wish to be shaved without delay—ecco! And this is a morning when every one has grave matter on his mind. Florence orphaned—the very pivot of Italy snatched away—heaven itself at a loss what to do next. *Oimè!* Well, well; the sun is nevertheless traveling on toward dinner-time again; and, as I was saying, you come like cheese ready grated. For this young stranger was wishing for an honorable trader who would advance him a sum on a certain ring of value, and if I had counted every goldsmith and money-lender in Florence on my fingers, I couldn't have found a better name than Menico Cennini. Besides, he hath other ware in which you deal—Greek learning, and young eyes—a double implement which you printers are always in need of."

The grave elderly man, son of that Bernardo Cennini, who, twenty years before, having heard of the new process of printing carried on by Germans, had cast his own types in Florence, remained necessarily in lathered silence and passivity while Nello showered this talk in his ears, but turned a slow sideway gaze on the stranger.

"This fine young man has unlimited Greek, Latin, or Italian at your service," continued Nello, fond of interpreting by very ample paraphrase. "He is as great a wonder of juvenile learning as Francesco Filelfo or our own incomparable Poliziano. A second Guarino, too, for he has had the misfortune to be shipwrecked, and has doubtless lost a store of precious manuscripts that might have contributed some correctness even to your correct editions, Domenico. Fortunately, he has rescued a few gems of rare value. His name is—you said your name, Messer, was——?"

"Tito Melema," said the stranger, slipping the ring from his finger, and presenting it to Cennini, whom Nello, not less rapid with his razor than with his tongue, had now released from the shaving-cloth.

Meanwhile the man who had entered the shop in company with the goldsmith—a tall figure, about fifty, with a short trimmed beard, wearing an old felt hat and a threadbare mantle—had kept his eye fixed on the Greek, and now said abruptly—

"Young man, I am painting a picture of Sinon deceiving old Priam, and I should be glad of your face for my Sinon, if you'd give me a sitting."

Tito Melema started and looked round with a pale astonishment in his face as if at a sudden accusation; but Nello left him no time to feel at a loss for an answer: "Piero," said the barber, "thou art the most extraordinary compound of humors and fancies ever packed into a human skin. What trick wilt thou play with the fine visage of this young scholar to make it suit thy traitor? Ask him rather to turn his eyes upward, and thou mayst make a Saint Sebastian of him that will draw troops of devout women, or, if thou art in a classical vein, put myrtle about his curls and make him a young Bacchus, or say rather a Phœbus Apollo, for his face is as warm and bright as a summer morning; it made me his friend in the space of a 'credo.'"

"Ay, Nello," said the painter, speaking with abrupt pauses; "and if thy tongue can leave off its everlasting chirping long enough for thy understanding to consider the matter, thou mayst see that thou has just shown the reason why the face of Messere will suit my traitor. A perfect traitor should have a face which vice can write no marks on—lips that will lie with a dimpled smile—eyes of such agatelike brightness and depth that no infamy can dull them—cheeks that will rise from a murder and not look haggard. I say not this young man is a traitor: I mean, he has a face that would make him the more perfect traitor if he had the heart of one, which is saying neither more nor less than that he has a beautiful face, informed with rich young blood, that will be nourished enough by food, and keep its color without much help of virtue. He may have the heart of a hero along with it; I aver nothing to the contrary. Ask Domenico there if the lapidaries can always tell a gem by the sight alone. And now I'm going to put the tow in my ears, for thy chatter and the bells

together are more than I can endure: so say no more to me, but trim my beard."

With these last words Piero (called "di Cosimo," from his master, Cosimo Rosselli) drew out two bits of tow, stuffed them in his ears, and placed himself in the chair before Nello, who shrugged his shoulders and cast a grimacing look of intelligence at the Greek, as much as to say, "A whimsical fellow, you perceive! Everybody holds his speeches as mere jokes."

Tito, who had stood transfixed, with his long dark eyes resting on the unknown man who had addressed him so equivocally, seemed recalled to his self-command by Piero's change of position and apparently satisfied with his explanation, was again giving his attention to Cennini, who presently said—

"This is a curious and valuable ring, young man. This intaglio of the fish with the crested serpent above it, in the black stratum of the onyx, or rather nicolo, is well shown by the surrounding blue of the upper stratum. The ring has, doubtless, a history?" added Cennini, looking up keenly at the young stranger.

"Yes, indeed," said Tito, meeting the scrutiny very frankly. "The ring was found in Sicily, and I have understood from those who busy themselves with gems and sigils, that both the stone and intaglio are of virtue to make the wearer fortunate, especially at sea, and also to restore to him whatever he may have lost. But," he continued, smiling, "though I have worn it constantly since I quitted Greece, it has not made me altogether fortunate at sea, you perceive, unless I am to count escape from drowning as a sufficient proof of its virtue. It remains to be seen whether my lost chests will come to light; but to lose no chance of such a result, Messer, I will pray you only to hold the ring for a short space as pledge for a small sum far beneath its value, and I will redeem it as soon as I can dispose of certain other gems which are secured within my doublet, or indeed as soon as I can earn something by any scholarly employment, if I may be so fortunate as to meet with such."

"That may be seen, young man, if you will come with me," said Cennini. "My brother Pietro, who is a better judge of scholarship than I, will perhaps be able to supply you with a task that may test your capabilities. Meanwhile, take back your ring until I can hand you the necessary florins, and, if it please you, come along with me."

“Yes, yes,” said Nello, “go with Messer Domenico, you cannot go in better company; he was born under the constellation that gives a man skill, riches, and integrity, whatever that constellation may be, which is of the less consequence because babies can’t choose their own horoscopes, and, indeed, if they could, there might be an inconvenient rush of babies at particular epochs. Besides, our Phœnix, the incomparable Pico, has shown that your horoscopes are all a nonsensical dream—which is the less troublesome opinion. *Addio! bel giovane!* don’t forget to come back to me.”

“No fear of that,” said Tito, beckoning a farewell, as he turned round his bright face at the door. “You are to do me a great service:—that is the most positive security for your seeing me again.”

“Say what thou wilt, Piero,” said Nello, as the young stranger disappeared, “I shall never look at such an outside as that without taking it as a sign of a lovable nature. Why, thou wilt say next that Lionardo, whom thou art always raving about, ought to have made his Judas as beautiful as St. John! But thou art deaf as the top of Mount Morello with that accursed tow in thy ears. Well, well: I’ll get a little more of this young man’s history from him before I take him to Bardo Bardi.”

CHAPTER V.

THE BLIND SCHOLAR AND HIS DAUGHTER.

THE Via de Bardi, a street noted in the history of Florence, lies in Oltrarno, or that portion of the city which clothes the southern bank of the river. It extends from the Ponte Vecchio to the Plaza de Mozzi at the head of the Ponte alle Grazie; its right-hand line of houses and walls being backed by the rather steep ascent which in the fifteenth century was known as the hill of Bogoli, the famous stone-quarry whence the city got its pavement—of dangerously unstable consistence when penetrated by rains; its left-hand buildings flanking the river and making on their northern side a length of quaint, irregularly-pierced façade, of which the waters gave a softened loving reflection as the sun begins to decline toward the western

heights. But quaint as these buildings are, some of them seem to the historical memory a too modern substitute for the famous houses of the Bardi family, destroyed by popular rage in the middle of the fourteenth century.

They were a proud and energetic stock, these Bardi; conspicuous among those who clutched the sword in the earliest world-famous quarrels of Florentines with Florentines, when the narrow streets were darkened with the high towers of the nobles, and when the old tutelary god Mars, as he saw the gutters reddened with neighbors' blood, might well have smiled at the centuries of lip-service paid to his rival, the Baptist. But the Bardi hands were of the sort that not only clutch the sword-hilt with vigor, but love the more delicate pleasure of fingering minted metal: they were matched, too, with true Florentine eyes, capable of discerning that power was to be won by other means than by rending and riving, and by the middle of the fourteenth century we find them risen from their original condition of *popolani* to be possessors, by purchase, of lands and strongholds, and the feudal dignity of Counts of Vernio, disturbing to the jealousy of their republican fellow-citizens. These lordly purchases are explained by our seeing the Bardi disastrously signalized only a few years later as standing in the very front of European commerce—the Christian Rothschilds of that time—undertaking to furnish specie for the wars of our Edward III., and having revenues “in kind” made over to them; especially in wool, most precious of freights for Florentine galleys. Their august debtor left them with an august deficit, and alarmed Sicilian creditors made a too sudden demand for the payment of deposits, causing a ruinous shock to the credit of the Bardi and of associated houses, which was felt as a commercial calamity along all the coasts of the Mediterranean. But, like the more modern bankrupts, they did not, for all that, hide their heads in humiliation; on the contrary, they seemed to have held them higher than ever, and to have been among the most arrogant of those grandees, who under certain noteworthy circumstances, open to all who will read the honest pages of Giovanni Villani, drew upon themselves the exasperation of the armed people in 1343. The Bardi, who had made themselves fast in their street between the two bridges, kept these narrow inlets, like panthers at bay, against the oncoming gonfalons of the people, and were only made to give way by an assault from the hill behind

them. Their houses by the river, to the number of twenty-two (*palagi e case grandi*), were sacked and burned, and many among the chief of those who bore the Bardi name were driven from the city. But an old Florentine family was many-rooted, and we find the Bardi maintaining importance and rising again and again to the surface of Florentine affairs in a more or less creditable manner, implying an untold family history that would have included even more vicissitudes and contrasts of dignity and disgrace, of wealth and poverty, than are usually seen on the background of wide kinship.* But the Bardi never resumed their proprietorship in the old street on the banks of the river, which in 1492 had long been associated with other names of mark, and especially with the Neri, who possessed a considerable range of houses on the site toward the hill.

In one of these Neri houses their lived, however, a descendent of the Bardi, and of that very branch which a century and a half before had become Counts of Vernio; a descendant who had inherited the old family pride and energy, the old love of pre-eminence, the old desire to leave a lasting track of his footsteps on the fast-whirling earth. But the family passions lived on in him under altered conditions: this descendant of the Bardi was not a man swift in street warfare, or one who loved to play the signor, fortifying strongholds and asserting the right to hang vassals, or a merchant and usurer of keen daring, who delighted in the generalship of wide commercial schemes: he was a man with a deep-veined hand, cramped by much copying of manuscripts, who ate sparing dinners and wore threadbare clothes, at first from choice and at last from necessity; who sat among his books and his marble fragments of the past, and saw them only by the light of those far-off younger days which still shone in his memory: he was a moneyless, blind old scholar—the Bardo de Bardi to whom Nello, the barber, had promised to introduce the young Greek, Tito Melema.

The house in which Bardo lived was situated on the side of the street nearest the hill, and was one of those large

* A sign that such contrasts were peculiarly frequent in Florence, is the fact that Saint Antonine, Prior of San Marco and afterward archbishop, in the first half of this fifteenth century, founded the society of Buonomini di San Martino (Good Men of St. Martin) with the main object of succoring the *poveri vergognosi*—in other words, paupers of good family. In the records of the famous Panciatichi family we find a certain Girolamo in this century who was reduced to such a state of poverty that he was obliged to seek charity for the mere means of sustaining life, though other members of his family were enormously wealthy.

sombre masses of stone building pierced by comparatively small windows, and surmounted by what may be called a roofed terrace or loggia, of which there are many examples still to be seen in the venerable city. Grim doors, with conspicuous scrolled hinges, having high up on each side of them a small window defended by iron bars, opened on a groined entrance court, empty of everything but a massive lamp-iron suspended from the centre of the groin. A smaller grim door on the left hand admitted to the stone staircase, and the rooms on the ground floor. These last were used as a warehouse by the proprietor; so was the first floor; and both were filled with precious stores, destined to be carried, some perhaps to the banks of the Scheldt, some to the shores of Africa, some to the isles of the Egean, or to the banks of the Euxine. Maso, the old serving-man, when he returned from the Mercato with the stock of cheap vegetables, had to make his slow way up to the second story before he reached the door of his master, Bardo, through which we are about to enter only a few mornings after Nello's conversation with the Greek.

We follow Maso across the antechamber to the door on the left hand, through which we pass as he opens it. He merely looks in and nods, while a clear young voice says, "Ah, you are come back, Maso. It is well. We have wanted nothing."

The voice came from the farther end of a long, spacious room, surrounded with shelves, on which books and antiquities were arranged in scrupulous order. Here and there, on separate stands in front of the shelves, were placed a beautiful feminine torso; a headless statue, with an uplifted muscular arm wielding a bladeless sword; rounded, dimpled, infantine limbs severed from the trunk, inviting the lips to kiss the cold marble; some well-preserved Roman busts; and two or three vases from Magna Grecia. A large table in the centre was covered with antique bronze lamps and small vessels in dark pottery. The color of these objects was chiefly pale or sombre: the vellum bindings, with their deep-ridged backs, gave little relief to the marble, livid with long burial; the once splendid patch of carpet at the farther end of the room had long been worn to dimness; the dark bronzes wanted sunlight upon them to bring out their tinge of green, and the sun was not yet high enough to send gleams of brightness through the narrow windows that looked on the Via de Bardi.

The only spot of bright color in the room was made by

the hair of a tall maiden of seventeen or eighteen, who was standing before a carved *leggio*, or reading-desk, such as is often seen in the choirs of Italian churches. The hair was of a reddish gold color, enriched by an unbroken small ripple, such as may be seen in the sunset clouds on grandest autumnal evenings. It was confined by a black fillet above her small ears, from which it rippled forward again, and made a natural veil for her neck above her square-cut gown of black *rascia*, or serge. Her eyes were bent on a large volume placed before her: one long white hand rested on the reading-desk, and the other clasped the back of her father's chair.

The blind father sat with head uplifted and turned a little aside toward his daughter, as if he were looking at her. His delicate paleness, set off by the black velvet cap which surmounted his drooping white hair, made all the more perceptible the likeness between his aged features and those of the young maiden, whose cheeks were also without any tinge of the rose. There was the same refinement of brow and nostril in both, counterbalanced by a full though firm mouth and powerful chin, which gave an expression of proud tenacity and latent impetuosity: an expression carried out in the backward poise of the girl's head, and the grand line of her neck and shoulders. It was a type of face of which one could not venture to say whether it would inspire love or only that unwilling admiration which is mixed with dread: the question must be decided by the eyes, which often seem charged with a more direct message from the soul. But the eyes of the father had long been silent, and the eyes of the daughter were bent on the Latin pages of Politian's "Miscellanea," from which she was reading aloud at the eightieth chapter, to the following effect:—

"There was a certain nymph of Thebes named Chariclo, especially dear to Pallas; and this nymph was the mother of Teiresias. But once when in the heat of summer, Pallas, in company with Chariclo, was bathing her disrobed limbs in the Heliconian Hippocrene, it happened that Teiresias coming as a hunter to quench his thirst at the same fountain, inadvertently beheld Minerva unveiled, and immediately became blind. For it is declared in the Saturnian laws, that he who beholds the gods against their will, atone for it by a heavy penalty. — When Teiresias had fallen into this calamity, Pallas, moved by the tears of Chariclo, endowed him with prophecy and length of days,

and even caused his prudence and wisdom to continue after he had entered among the shades, so that an oracle spake from his tomb: and she gave him a staff, where-with, as by a guide, he might walk without stumbling. — And hence, Nonnus, in the fifth book of the ‘*Dionysiaca*,’ introduces Actæon exclaiming that he calls Teiresias happy, since, without dying, and with the loss of his eyesight merely, he had beheld Minerva unveiled, and thus, though blind, could forevermore carry her image in his soul.”

At this point in the reading, the daughter’s hand slipped from the back of the chair and met her father’s, which he had that moment uplifted; but she had not looked round, and was going on, though with a voice a little altered by some suppressed feeling, to read the Greek quotation from Nonnus, when the old man said —

“Stay, Romola; reach me my own copy of Nonnus. It is a more correct copy than any in Poliziano’s hands, for I made emendations in it which have not yet been communicated to any man. I finished it in 1477, when my sight was fast failing me.”

Romola walked to the farther end of the room, with the queenly step which was the simple action of her tall, finely-wrought frame, without the slightest conscious adjustment of herself.

“Is it in the right place, Romola?” asked Bardo, who was perpetually seeking the assurance that the outward fact continued to correspond with the image which lived to the minutest detail in his mind.

“Yes, father; at the west end of the room, on the third shelf from the bottom, behind the bust of Hadrian, above Apollonius Rhodius and Callimachus, and below Lucan and Silicus Italicus.”

As Romola said this, a fine ear would have detected in her clear voice and distinct utterance, a faint suggestion of weariness struggling with habitual patience. But as she approached her father and saw his arms stretched out a little with nervous excitement to seize the volume, her hazel eyes filled with pity; she hastened to lay the book on his lap, and kneeled down by him, looking up at him as if she believed that the love in her face must surely make its way through the dark obstruction that shut out everything else. At that moment the doubtful attractiveness of Romola’s face, in which pride and passion seemed to be quivering in the balance with native refinement and intelligence, was transfigured to the most lovable woman-

liness by mingled pity and affection: it was evident that the deepest fount of feeling within her had not yet wrought its way to the less changeable features, and only found its outlet through her eyes.

But the father, unconscious of that soft radiance, looked flushed and agitated as his hand explored the edges and back of the large book.

"The vellum is yellowed in these thirteen years, Romola."

"Yes, father," said Romola, gently; "but your letters at the back are dark and plain still—fine Roman letters; and the Greek character," she continued, laying the book open on her father's knee, "is more beautiful than that of any of your bought manuscripts."

"Assuredly, child," said Bardo, passing his finger across the page, as if he hoped to discriminate line and margin. "What hired amanuensis can be equal to the scribe who loves the words that grow under his hand, and to whom an error or indistinctness in the text is more painful than a sudden darkness or obstacle across his path? And even these mechanical printers who threaten to make learning a base and vulgar thing—even they must depend on the manuscript over which we scholars have bent with that insight into the poet's meaning which is closely akin to the *mens divini* of the poet himself; unless they would flood the world with grammatical falsities and inexplicable anomalies that would turn the very fountain of Parnassus into a deluge of poisonous mud. But find the passage in the fifth book, to which Poliziano refers—I know it very well."

Seating herself on a low stool, close to her father's knee, Romola took the book on her lap and read the four verses containing the exclamation of Actæon.

"It is true, Romola," said Bardo, when she had finished; "It is a true conception of the poet; for what is that grosser, narrower light by which men behold merely the petty scene around them, compared with that far-stretching, lasting light which spreads over centuries of thought, and over the life of nations, and makes clear to us the minds of the immortals who have reaped the great harvest and left us to glean in their furrows? For me, Romola, even when I could see, it was with the great dead that I lived; while the living often seemed to me mere spectres—shadows dispossessed of true feeling and intelligence; and unlike those Lamiae, to whom Poliziano, with

that superficial ingenuity which I do not deny to him, compares our inquisitive Florentines, because they put on their eyes when they went abroad, and took them off when they got home again, I have returned from the converse of the streets as from a forgotten dream, and have sat down among my books, saying with Petrarca, the modern who is least unworthy to be named after the ancients, '*Libri medullitus delectant, colloquuntur, consulunt, et vivā quadam nobis atque arguta familiaritate junguntur.*'"

"And in one thing you are happier than your favorite Petrarca, father," said Romola, affectionately humoring the old man's disposition to dilate in this way; "for he used to look at his copy of Homer and think sadly that the Greek was a dead letter to him: so far, he had the inward blindness that you feel is worse than your outward blindness."

"True, child, for I carry within me the fruits of that fervid study which I gave to the Greek tongue under the teaching of the younger Crisolora, and Filelfo, and Argiripulo; though that great work in which I had desired to gather, as into a firm web, all the threads that my research had laboriously disentangled, and which would have been the vintage of my life, was cut off by the failure of my sight and my want of a fitting coadjutor. For the sustained zeal and unconquerable patience demanded from those who would tread the unbeaten paths of knowledge are still less reconcilable with the wandering, vagrant propensity of the feminine mind than with the feeble powers of the feminine body."

"Father," said Romola, with a sudden flush and in an injured tone, "I read anything you wish me to read; and I will look out any passages for you, and make whatever notes you want."

"Bardo shook his head, and smiled with a bitter sort of pity. "As well try to be a pentathlos and perform all the five feats of the palæstra with the limbs of a nymph. Have I forgotten thy fainting in the mere search for the references I needed to explain a single passage of Callimachus?"

"But, father, it was the weight of the books, and Maso can help me; it was not want of attention and patience."

Bardo shook his head again. "It is not mere bodily organs that I want: it is the sharp edge of a young mind to pierce the way for my somewhat blunted faculties. For blindness acts like a dam, sending the streams of thought

backward along the already-traveled channels and hindering the course onward. If my son had not forsaken me, deluded by debasing fanatical dreams, worthy, only of an energumen whose dwelling is among tombs, I might have gone on and seen my path broadening to the end of my life; for he was a youth of great promise. But it has closed in now," the old man continued, after a short pause; "it has closed in now—all but the narrow track he has left me to tread—alone in my blindness."

Romola started from her seat, and carried away the large volume to its place again, stung too acutely by her father's last words to remain motionless as well as silent; and when she turned away from the shelf again, she remained standing at some distance from him, stretching her arms downward and clasping her fingers tightly as she looked with a sad dreariness in her young face at the lifeless objects around her—the parchment backs, the unchanging mutilated marble, the bits of obsolete bronze and clay.

Bardo, though usually susceptible to Romola's movements and eager to trace them, was now too entirely preoccupied by the pain of rankling memories to notice her departure from his side.

"Yes," he went on, "with my son to aid me, I might have had my due share in the triumphs of this century: the names of the Bardi, father and son, might have been held reverently on the lips of scholars in the ages to come; not on account of frivolous verses or philosophical treatises, which are superfluous and presumptuous attempts to imitate the inimitable, such as allure vain men like Panhormita and from which even the admirable Poggio did not keep himself sufficiently free; but because we should have given a lamp whereby men might have studied the supreme productions of the past. For why is a young man like Poliziano (who was not yet born when I was already held worthy to maintain a discussion with Thomas of Sarzana) to have a glorious memory as a commentator on the Pandects—why is Ficino, whose Latin is an offense to me, and who wanders purblind among the superstitious fancies that marked the decline at once of art, literature and philosophy, to descend to posterity as the very high priest of Platonism, while I, who am more than their equal, have not effected anything but scattered work, which will be appropriated by other men. Why? but because my son, whom I had brought up to replenish my ripe learning with young enterprise, left me and all liberal pursuits that

he might lash himself and howl at midnight with besotted friars—that he might go wandering on pilgrimages befitting men who know of no past older than the missal and the crucifix?—left me when the night was already beginning to fall on me.”

In these last words the old man’s voice, which had risen high in indignant protest, fell into a tone of reproach so tremulous and plaintive that Romola, turning her eyes again toward the blind aged face, felt her heart swell with forgiving pity. She seated herself by her father again, and placed her hand on his knee—too proud to obtrude consolation in words that might seem like a vindication of her own value, yet wishing to comfort him by some sign of her presence.

“Yes, Romola,” said Bardo, automatically letting his left hand, with its massive prophylactic rings, fall a little too heavily on the delicate blue-veined back of the girl’s right, so that she bit her lip to prevent herself from starting. “If even Florence only is to remember me, it can but be on the same ground that it will remember Niccolò Niccoli—because I forsook the vulgar pursuit of wealth in commerce that I might devote myself to collecting the precious remains of ancient art and wisdom; and leave them, after the example of the munificent Romans, for an everlasting possession to my fellow-citizens. But why do I say Florence only? If Florence remembers me, will not the world, too, remember me?—and yet,” added Bardo, after a short pause, his voice falling again into a saddened key, “Lorenzo’s untimely death has raised a new difficulty. I had his promise—I should have had his bond—that my collection should always bear my name and should never be sold, though the harpies might clutch everything else; but there is enough for them—there is more than enough—and for thee, too, Romola, there will be enough. Besides, thou wilt marry; Bernardo reproaches me that I do not seek a fitting *parentado* for thee, and we will delay no longer, we will think about it.”

“No, no, father; what could you do? besides, it is useless: wait till some one seeks me,” said Romola, hastily.

“Nay, my child, that is not the paternal duty. It was not so held by the ancients, and in this respect Florentines have not degenerated from their ancestral customs.”

“But I will study diligently,” said Romola, her eyes dilating with anxiety. “I will become as learned as Cassandra Fedele: I will try and be as useful to you as if I

had been a boy, and then perhaps some great scholar will want to marry me, and will not mind about a dowry; and he will like to come and live with you, and he will be to you in place of my brother; and you will not be sorry that I was a daughter."

There was a rising sob in Romola's voice as she said the last words, which touched the fatherly fiber in Bardo. He stretched his hand upward a little in search of her golden hair, and as she placed her head under his hand, he gently stroked it, leaning toward her as if his eyes discerned some glimmer there.

"Nay, Romola mia, I said not so; if I have pronounced an anathema on a degenerate and ungrateful son, I said not that I could wish thee other than the sweet daughter thou hast been to me. For what son could have tended me so gently in the frequent sickness I have had of late? And even in learning thou art not, according to thy measure, contemptible. Something, perhaps, were to be wished in thy capacity of attention and memory, not incompatible even with the feminine mind. But as Calcondila bore testimony, when he aided me to teach thee, thou hast a ready apprehension, and even a wide-glancing intelligence. And thou hast a man's nobility of soul: thou hast never fretted me with thy petty desires as thy mother did. It is true, I have been careful to keep thee aloof from the debasing influence of thy own sex, with their sparrow-like frivolity and their enslaving superstition, except, indeed, from that of our cousin Brigida, who may well serve as a scarecrow and a warning. And though—since I agree with the divine Petrarca, when he declares, quoting the '*Aulularia*' of Plautus, who again was indebted for the truth to the supreme Greek intellect, '*Optimam fœminam nullam esse, alia licet alia pejor sit*'—I cannot boast that thou art entirely lifted out of that lower category to which Nature assigned thee, nor even that in erudition thou art on a par with the more learned women of this age; thou art, nevertheless—yes, Romola mia," said the old man, his pedantry again melting into tenderness, "thou art my sweet daughter, and thy voice is as the lower notes of the flute, '*dulcis, durabilis, clara, pura, secans aëra et auribus sedens*,' according to the choice words of Quintilian; and Bernardo tells me thou art fair, and thy hair is like the brightness of the morning, and indeed it seems to me that I discern some radiance from thee. Ah! I know how all else looks in this room, but thy form I only guess at. Thou

art no longer the little woman six years old, that faded for me into darkness; thy art tall, and thy arm is but little below mine. Let us walk together."

The old man rose, and Romola, soothed by these beams of tenderness, looked happy again as she drew his arm within hers, and placed in his right hand the stick which rested at the side of his chair. While Bardo had been sitting, he had seemed hardly more than sixty: his face, though pale, had that refined texture in which wrinkles and lines are never deep; but now that he began to walk, he looked as old as he really was—rather more than seventy; for his tall, spare frame had the student's stoop of the shoulders, and he stepped with the undecided gait of the blind.

"No, Romola," he said, pausing against the bust of Hadrian, and passing his stick from the right to the left that he might explore the familiar outline with a "seeing hand." "There will be nothing else to preserve my memory and carry down my name as a member of the great republic of letters—nothing but my library and my collection of antiquities. And they are choice," continued Bardo, pressing the bust and speaking in a tone of insistence. The collections of Niccolò I know were larger; but take any collection which is the work of a single man—that of the great Boccaccio even—mine will surpass it. That of Poggio was contemptible compared with mine. It will be a great gift to unborn scholars. And there is nothing else. For even if I were to yield to the wish of Aldo Manuzio, when he sets up his press at Venice, and give him the aid of my annotated manuscripts, I know well what would be the result: some other scholar's name would stand on the title-page of the edition—some scholar who would have fed on my honey, and then declared in his preface that he had gathered it all himself fresh from Hymettus. Else, why have I refused the loan of many an annotated codex? why have I refused to make public any of my translations? why? but because scholarship is a system of licensed robbery, and your man in scarlet and furred robe who sits in judgment on thieves, is himself a thief of the thoughts and the fame that belong to his fellows. But against that robbery Bardo de Bardi shall struggle—though blind and forsaken he shall struggle. I too have a right to be remembered—as great a right as Pontanus or Merula, whose names will be foremost on the lips of posterity, because they sought patronage and found

it; because they had tongues that could flatter, and blood that was used to be nourished from the client's basket. I have a right to be remembered."

The old man's voice had become at once loud and tremulous, and a pink flush overspread his proud, delicately-cut features, while the habitually raised attitude of his head gave the idea that behind the curtain of his blindness he saw some imaginary high tribunal to which he was appealing against the injustice of Fame.

Romola was moved with sympathetic indignation, for in her nature too there lay the same large claims, and the same spirit of struggle against their denial. She tried to calm her father by a still prouder word than his.

"Nevertheless, father, it is a great gift of the gods to be born with a hatred and contempt of all injustice and meanness. Yours is a higher lot, never to have lied and truckled, than to have shared honors won by dishonor. There is strength in scorn, as there was in the martial fury by which men became insensible to wounds."

"It is well said, Romola. It is a Promethean word thou hast uttered," answered Bardo, after a little interval in which he had begun to lean on his stick again, and to walk on. "And I indeed am not to be pierced by the shafts of Fortune. My armor is the *æs triplex* of a clear conscience, and a mind nourished by the precepts of philosophy. 'For men,' says Epictetus, 'are disturbed not by things themselves, but by their opinions or thoughts concerning those things.' And again, 'whosoever will be free, let him not desire or dread that which it is in the power of others either to deny or inflict: otherwise, he is a slave.' And of all such gifts as are dependent on the caprice of fortune or of men, I have long ago learned to say, with Horace—who, however, is too wavering in his philosophy, vacillating between the precepts of Zeno and the less worthy maxims of Epicurus, and attempting, as we say, 'duabus sellis sedere'—concerning such accidents, I say, with the pregnant brevity of the poet—

'Sunt qui non habeant, est qui non curat habere.'

He is referring to gems, and purple, and other insignia of wealth; but I may apply his words not less justly to the tributes men pay us with their lips and their pens, which are also matters of purchase, and often with base coin. Yes, '*inanis*'—hollow, empty—is the epithet justly bestowed on Fame."

They made the tour of the room in silence after this; but Bardo's lip-born maxims were as powerless over the passion which had been moving him, as if they had been written on parchment and hung round his neck in a sealed bag; and he broke forth again in a new tone of insistence.

"*Inanis?*" yes, if it is a lying fame; but not if it is the just meed of labor and a great purpose. I claim my right: it is not fair that the work of my brain and my hands should not be a monument to me—it is not just that my labor should bear the name of another man. It is but little to ask," the old man went on bitterly, "that my name should be over the door—that men should own themselves debtors to the Bardi Library in Florence. They will speak coldly of me, perhaps: 'a diligent collector and transcriber,' they will say, 'and also of some critical ingenuity, but one who could hardly be conspicuous in an age so fruitful in illustrious scholars. Yet he merits our pity, for in the latter years of his life he was blind, and his only son, to whose education he had devoted his best years——' Nevertheless, my name will be remembered, and men will honor me: not with the breath of flattery, purchased by mean bribes, but because I have labored, and because my labors will remain. Debts! I know there are debts; and there is thy dowry, Romola, to be paid. But there must be enough—or, at least, there can lack but a small sum, such as the Signoria might well provide. And if Lorenzo had not died, all would have been secured and settled. But now——"

At this moment Maso opened the door, and advancing to his master, announced that Nello, the barber, had desired him to say, that he was come with the Greek scholar whom he had asked leave to introduce.

"It is well," said the old man. "Bring them in."

Bardo, conscious that he looked more dependent when he was walking, liked alway to be seated in the presence of strangers, and Romola, without needing to be told, conducted him to his chair. She was standing by him at her full height, in quiet majestic self-possession, when the visitors entered; and the most penetrating observer would hardly have divined that this proud pale pace, at the slightest touch on the fibres of affection or pity, could become passionate with tenderness, or that this woman, who imposed a certain awe on those who approached her, was in a state of girlish simplicity and ignorance concerning the world outside her father's books.

CHAPTER VI.

DAWNING HOPES.

WHEN Maso opened the door again, and ushered in the two visitors, Nello, first making a deep reverence to Romola, gently pushed Tito before him, and advanced with him toward her father.

"Messer Bardo," he said, in a more measured and respectful tone than was usual with him, "I have the honor of presenting to you the Greek scholar, who has been eager to have speech of you, not less from the report I have made to him of your learning and your priceless collections, than because of the furtherance your patronage may give him under the transient need to which he has been reduced by shipwreck. His name is Tito Melema, at your service."

Romola's astonishment could hardly have been greater if the stranger had worn a panther-skin and carried a thyrsus; for the cunning barber had said nothing of the Greek's age or appearance; and among her father's scholarly visitors, she had hardly ever seen any but middle-aged or gray-haired men. There was only one masculine face, at once youthful and beautiful, the image of which remained deeply impressed on her mind: it was that of her brother, who long years ago had taken her on his knee, kissed her, and never come back again: a fair face, with sunny hair, like her own. But the habitual attitude of her mind toward strangers—a proud self-dependence and determination to ask for nothing even by a smile—confirmed in her by her father's complaints against the world's injustice, was like a snowy embankment hemming in the rush of admiring surprise. Tito's bright face showed its rich-tinted beauty without any rivalry of color above his black *sajo* or tunic reaching to the knees. It seemed like a wreath of spring, dropped suddenly in Romola's young but wintry life, which had inherited nothing but memories—memories of a dead mother, of a lost brother, of a blind father's happier time—memories of far-off light, love, and beauty, that lay embedded in dark mines of books, and could hardly give out their brightness again until they were kindled for her by the torch of some known joy. Nevertheless, she returned Tito's bow, made to her on entering, with the same pale proud face as ever; but, as he approached, the snow melted, and when he

ventured to look toward her again, while Nello was speaking, a pink flush overspread her face, to vanish again almost immediately, as if her imperious will had recalled it. Tito's glance, on the contrary, had that gentle, beseeching admiration in it which is the most propitiating of appeals to a proud, shy woman, and is perhaps the only atonement a man can make for being too handsome. The finished fascination of his air came chiefly from the absence of demand and assumption. It was that of a fleet, soft-coated, dark-eyed animal that delights you by not bounding away in indifference from you, and unexpectedly pillows its chin on your palm, and looks up at you desiring to be stroked—as if it loved you.

“Messere, I give you welcome,” said Bardo, with some condescension; “misfortune wedded to learning, and especially to Greek learning, is a letter of credit that should win the ear of every instructed Florentine; for, as you are doubtless aware, since the period when your countryman, Manuëlo Crisolora, diffused the light of his teaching in the chief cities of Italy, now nearly a century ago, no man is held worthy of the name of scholar who has acquired merely the transplanted and derivative literature of the Latins; rather, such inert students are stigmatized as *opici* or barbarians according to the phrase of the Romans themselves, who frankly replenished their urns at the fountain-head. I am, as you perceive, and as Nello has doubtless forewarned you, totally blind: a calamity to which we Florentines are held especially liable, whether owing to the cold winds which rush upon us in spring from the passes of the Apennines, or to that sudden transition from the cool gloom of our houses to the dazzling brightness of our summer sun, by which the *lippi* are said to have been made so numerous among the ancient Romans; or, in fine, to some occult cause which eludes our superficial surmises. But I pray you be seated: Nello, my friend, be seated.”

Bardo paused until his fine ear had assured him that the visitors were seating themselves, and that Romola was taking her usual chair at his right hand. Then he said—

“From what part of Greece do you come, Mersere? I had thought that your unhappy country had been almost exhausted of those sons who could cherish in their minds any image of her original glory, though indeed the barbarous Sultans have of late shown themselves not indisposed to engraft on their wild stock the precious vine which

their own fierce bands have hewn down and trampled under foot. From what part of Greece do you come?"

"I sailed last from Nauplia," said Tito; "but I have resided both at Constantinople and Thessalonica, and have traveled in various parts little visited by Western Christians since the triumph of the Turkish arms. I should tell you, however, Messere, that I was not born in Greece, but at Bari. I spent the first sixteen years of my life in Southern Italy and Sicily."

While Tito was speaking, some emotion passed, like a breath on the waters, across Bardo's delicate features; he leaned forward, put out his right hand toward Romola, and turned his head as if about to speak to her; but then, correcting himself, turned away again, and said, in a subdued voice—

"Excuse me; is it not true—you are young?"

"I am three-and-twenty," said Tito.

"Ah," said Bardo, still in a tone of subdued excitement, "and you had, doubtless, a father who cared for your early instruction—who, perhaps, was himself a scholar?"

There was a slight pause before Tito's answer came to the ear of Bardo: but for Romola and Nello it began with a slight shock that seemed to pass through him, and cause a momentary quivering of the lip; doubtless at the revival of a supremely painful remembrance.

"Yes," he replied, "at least a father by adoption. He was a Neapolitan, and of accomplished scholarship, both Latin and Greek. But," added Tito, after another slight pause, "he is lost to me—was lost on a voyage he too rashly undertook to Delos."

Bardo sank back again, too delicate to ask another question that might probe a sorrow which he divined to be recent. Romola, who knew well what were the fibres that Tito's voice had stirred in her father, felt that this new acquaintance had with wonderful suddenness got within the barrier that lay between them and the alien world. Nello, thinking that the evident check given to the conversation offered a graceful opportunity for relieving himself from silence, said—

"In truth, it is as clear as Venetian glass that this fine young man has had the best of training; for the two Cennini have set him to work at their Greek sheet already, and it seems to me they are not men to begin cutting before they have felt the edge of their tools; they tested

him well beforehand, we may be sure, and if there are two things not to be hidden—love and a cough—I say there is a third, and that is ignorance, when once a man is obliged to do something besides wagging his head. The *tonsor inequalis* is inevitably betrayed when he takes the shears in his hand; is it not true, Messer Bardo? I speak after the fashion of a barber, but, as Luigi Pulci says—

‘Perdonimi s’io fallo: chi m’ascolta
Intenda il mio volgar col suo latino.’”

“Nay, my good Nello,” said Bardo, with an air of friendly severity, “you are not altogether illiterate, and might doubtless have made a more respectable progress in learning if you had abstained somewhat from the *cicalata* and gossip of the street corner, to which our Florentines are excessively addicted; but still more if you had not clogged your memory with those frivolous productions of which Luigi Pulci has furnished the most peccant exemplar—a compendium of extravagances and incongruities the farthest removed from the models of a pure age, and resembling rather the *grylli* or conceits of a period when mystic meaning was held a warrant for monstrosity of form; with this difference, that while the monstrosity is retained, the mystic meaning is absent; in contemptible contrast with the great poem of Virgil, who, as I long held with Filelfo, before Landino had taken upon him to expound the same opinion, embodied the deepest lessons of philosophy in a graceful and well-knit fable. And I cannot but regard the multiplication of these babbling, lawless productions, albeit countenanced by the patronage, and in some degree the example, of Dorenzo himself, otherwise a friend to true learning, as a sign that the glorious hopes of this century are to be quenched in gloom; nay, that they have been the delusive prologue to an age worse than that of iron—the age of tinsel and gossamer, in which no thought has substance enough to be moulded into consistent and lasting form.”

“Once more, pardon,” said Nello, opening his palms outward, and shrugging his shoulders, “I find myself knowing so many things in good Tuscan before I have time to think of the Latin for them; and Messer Luigi’s rhymes are always slipping off the lips of my customers:—that is what corrupts me. And, indeed, talking of customers, I have left my shop and my reputation too long in the custody of my slow Sandro, who does not deserve even

to be called a *tonsor inequalis*, but rather to be pronounced simply a bungler in the vulgar tongue. So with your permission Messer Bardo, I will take my leave—well understood that I am at your service whenever Maso calls upon me. It seems a thousand years till I dress and perfume the damigella's hair, which deserves to shine in the heavens as a constellation, though indeed it were a pity for it ever to go so far out of reach."

Three voices made a fugue of friendly farewells to Nello, as he retreated with a bow to Romola and a beck to Tito. The acute barber saw that the pretty youngster, who had crept into his liking by some strong magic, was well launched in Bardo's favorable regard; and satisfied that his introduction had not miscarried so far, he felt the propriety of retiring.

The little burst of wrath, called forth by Nello's unlucky quotation, had diverted Bardo's mind from the feelings which had just before been hemming in further speech, and he now addressed Tito again with his ordinary calmness.

"Ah, young man, you are happy in having been able to unite the advantages of travel with those of study, and you will be welcome among us as a bringer of fresh tidings from a land which has become sadly strange to us, except through the agents of a now restricted commerce and the reports of hasty pilgrims. For those days are in the far distance which I myself witnessed, when men like Aurispa and Guarino went out to Greece as to a storehouse, and came back laden with manuscripts which every scholar was eager to borrow—and, be it owned with shame, not always willing to restore; nay, even the days when erudite Greeks flocked to our shores for a refuge, seem far off now—farther off than the on-coming of my blindness. But doubtless, young man, research after the treasures of antiquity was not alien to the purpose of your travels?"

"Assuredly not," said Tito. "On the contrary, my companion—my father—was willing to risk his life in his zeal for the discovery of inscriptions and other traces of ancient civilization.

"And I trust there is a record of his researches and their results," said Bardo, eagerly, "since they must be even more precious than those of Ciriaco, which I have diligently availed myself of, though they are not always illuminated by adequate learning."

"There *was* such a record," said Tito, "but it was lost,

like everything else, in the shipwreck I suffered below Ancona. The only record left is such as remains in our—in my memory.”

“You must lose no time in committing it to paper, young man,” said Bardo, with growing interest. “Doubtless you remember much, if you aided in transcription; for when I was your age, words wrought themselves into my mind as if they had been fixed by the tool of the graver: wherefore I constantly marvel at the capriciousness of my daughter’s memory, which grasps certain objects with tenacity, and lets fall all those minutiae whereon depends accuracy, the very soul of scholarship. But I apprehend no such danger with you, young man, if your will has seconded the advantages of your training.”

When Bardo made this reference to his daughter, Tito ventured to turn his eyes toward her, and at the accusation against her memory his face broke into its brightest smile, which was reflected as inevitably as sudden sunbeams in Romola’s. Conceive the soothing delight of that smile to her! Romola had never dreamed that there was a scholar in the world who would smile at the deficiency for which she was constantly made to feel herself a culprit. It was like the dawn of a new sense to her—the sense of comradeship. They did not look away from each other immediately, as if the smile had been a stolen one; they looked and smiled with frank enjoyment.

“She is not really so cold and proud,” thought Tito.

“Does *he* forget too, I wonder?” thought Romola. “Yet I hope not, else he will vex my father.”

But Tito was obliged to turn away, and answer Bardo’s question.

“I have had much practice in transcription,” he said; “but in the case of inscriptions copied in memorable scenes, rendered doubly impressive by the sense of risk and adventure, it may have happened that my retention of written characters has been weakened. On the plain of Eurotas, or among the gigantic stones of Mycenæ and Tyrins—especially when the fear of the Turk hovers over one like a vulture—the mind wanders, even though the hand writes faithfully what the eye dictates. But something doubtless I have retained,” added Tito with a modesty which was not false, though he was conscious that it was not politic, “something that might be of service if illustrated and corrected by a wider learning than my own.”

“That is well spoken, young man,” said Bardo, delighted.

"And I will not withhold from you such aid as I can give, if you like to communicate with me concerning your recollections. I foresee a work which will be a useful supplement to the 'Isolario' of Cristoforo Buondelmonte, and which may take rank with the 'Itineraria' of Ciriaco and the admirable Ambrogio Traversari. But we must prepare ourselves for calumny, young man," Bardo went on with energy, as if the work were already growing so fast that the time of trial was near; "if your book contains novelties you will be charged with forgery; if my elucidations should clash with any principles of interpretation adopted by another scholar, our personal characters will be attacked, we shall be impeached with foul actions; you must prepare yourself to be told that your monther was a fish-woman, and that your father was a renegade priest or a hanged malefactor. I myself, for having shown error in a single preposition, had an invective written against me wherein I was charged with treachery, fraud, indecency, and even hideous crimes. Such, my young friend—such are the flowers with which the glorious path of scholarship is strewed! But tell me, then: I have learned much concerning Byzantium and Thessalonica long ago from Demetrio Calcondila, who has but lately departed from Florence; but you, it seems, have visited less familiar scenes?"

"Yes; we made what I may call a pilgrimage full of danger, for the sake of visiting places which have almost died out of the memory of the West, for they lie away from the track of pilgrims; and my father used to say that scholars themselves hardly imagine them to have any existence out of books. He was of opinion that a new and more glorious era would open for learning when men should begin to look for their commentaries on the ancient writers in the remains of cities and temples, nay, in the paths of the rivers, and on the face of the valleys and the mountains."

"Ah!" said Bardo, fervidly, "your father, then, was not a common man. Was he fortunate, may I ask? Had he many friends?" These last words were uttered in a tone charged with meaning.

"No; he made enemies—chiefly, I believe, by a certain impetuous candor; and they hindered his advancement, so that he lived in obscurity. And he would never stoop to conciliate: he could never forget an injury."

"Ah!" said Bardo again, with a long, deep intonation.

"Among our hazardous expeditions," continued Tito,

willing to prevent further questions on a point so personal, "I remember with particular vividness a hastily snatched visit to Athens. Our hurry, and the double danger of being seized as prisoners by the Turks, and of our galley raising anchor before we could return, made it seem like a fevered vision of the night—the wide plain, the girdling mountains, the ruined porticoes and columns, either standing far aloof, as if receding from our hurried footsteps, or else jammed in confusedly among the dwellings of Christians degraded into servitude, or among the forts and turrets of their Moslem conquerors, who have their stronghold on the Acropolis."

"You fill me with surprise," said Bardo. "Athens, then, is not utterly destroyed and swept away, as I had imagined?"

"No wonder you should be under that mistake, for few even of the Greeks themselves, who live beyond the mountain boundary of Attica, know anything about the present condition of Athens, or *Setine*, as the sailors call it. I remember, as we were rounding the promontory of Sunium, the Greek pilot we had on board our Venetian galley pointed to the mighty columns that stand on the summit of the rock—the remains, as you know well, of the great temple erected to the goddess Athena, who looked down from that high shrine with triumph at her conquered rival Poseidon;—well, our Greek pilot, pointing to those columns, said, 'That was the school of the great philosopher Aristotle.' And at Athens itself, the monk who acted as our guide in the hasty view we snatched, insisted most on showing us the spot where St. Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, or some such legend."

"Talk not of monks and their legends, young man!" said Bardo, interrupting Tito impetuously. "It is enough to overlay human hope and enterprise with an eternal frost to think that the ground which was trodden by philosophers and poets is crawled over by those insect-swarms of besotted fanatics or howling hypocrites."

"*Perdio*, I have no affection for them," said Tito, with a shrug; "servitude agrees well with a religion like theirs, which lies in the renunciation of all that makes life precious to other men. And they carry the yoke that befits them; their matin chant is drowned by the voice of the muezzin, who, from the gallery of the high tower on the Acropolis, calls every Mussulman to his prayers. That tower springs from the Parthenon itself; and every time

we paused and directed our eyes toward it, our guide set up a wail, that a temple which had once been won from the diabolical uses of the pagans to become the temple of another virgin than Pallas—the Virgin-Mother of God—was now again perverted to the accursed ends of the Moslem. It was the sight of those walls of the Acropolis, which disclosed themselves in the distance as we leaned over the side of our galley when it was forced by contrary winds to anchor in the Piræus, that fired my father's mind with the determination to see Athens at all risks, and in spite of the sailors' warnings that if we lingered till a change of wind, they would depart without us: but, after all, it was impossible for us to venture near the Acropolis, for the sight of men eager in examining 'old stones' raised the suspicion that we were Venetian spies, and we had to hurry back to the harbor."

"We will talk more of these things," said Bardo, eagerly. "You must recall everything, to the minutest trace left in your memory. You will win the gratitude of after-times by leaving a record of the aspect Greece bore while yet the barbarians had not swept away every trace of the structures that Pausanias and Pliny described: you will take those great writers as your models; and such contribution of criticism and suggestion as my riper mind can supply shall not be wanting to you. There will be much to tell; for you have traveled, you said, in the Peloponnesus?"

"Yes; and in Bœotia also: I have rested in the groves of Helicon, and tasted of the fountain Hippocrene. But on every memorable spot in Greece conquest after conquest has set its seal, till there is a confusion of ownership even in ruins, that only close study and comparison could unravel. High over every fastness, from the plains of Lacedæmon to the straits of Thermopylæ, there towers some huge Frankish fortress, once inhabited by a French or Italian marquis, now either abandoned or held by Turkish bands."

"Stay!" cried Bardo, whose mind was now too thoroughly preoccupied by the idea of the future book to attend to Tito's further narration. "Do you think of writing in Latin or Greek? Doubtless Greek is the more ready clothing for your thoughts, and it is the nobler language. But, on the other hand, Latin is the tongue in which we shall measure ourselves with the larger and more famous number of modern rivals. And if you are less at ease in it, I will aid you—yes, I will spend on you that long-

accumulated study which was to have been thrown into the channel of another work—a work in which I myself was to have had a helpmate.”

Bardo paused a moment, and then added—

“But who knows whether that work may not be executed yet? For you, too, young man, have been brought up by a father who poured into your mind all the long-gathered stream of his knowledge and experience. Our aid might be mutual.”

Romola, who had watched her father's growing excitement, and divined well the invisible currents of feeling that determined every question and remark, felt herself in a glow of strange anxiety: she turned her eyes on Tito continually, to watch the impression her father's words made on him, afraid lest he should be inclined to dispel these visions of co-operation which were lighting up her father's face with a new hope. But no! He looked so bright and gentle: he must feel, as she did, that in this eagerness of blind age there was piteousness enough to call forth inexhaustible patience. How much more strongly he would feel this if he knew about her brother! A girl of eighteen imagines the feelings behind the face that has moved her with its sympathetic youth, as easily as primitive people imagined the humors of the gods in fair weather: what is she to believe in, if not in this vision woven from within?

And Tito was really very far from feeling impatient. He delighted in sitting there with the sense that Romola's attention was fixed on him, and that he could occasionally look at her. He was pleased that Bardo should take an interest in him: and he did not dwell with enough seriousness on the prospect of the work in which he was to be aided, to feel moved by it to anything else than that easy, good-humored acquiescence which was natural to him.

“I shall be proud and happy,” he said, in answer to Bardo's last words, “if my services can be held a meet offering to the matured scholarship of Messere. But doubtless”—here he looked toward Romola—“the lovely damigella, your daughter, makes all other aid superfluous: for I have learned from Nello that she has been nourished on the highest studies from her earliest years.”

“You are mistaken,” said Romola; “I am by no means sufficient to my father: I have not the gifts that are necessary for scholarship.”

Romola did not make this self-depreciatory statement in a tone of anxious humility, but with a proud gravity.

"Nay, my Romola," said her father, not willing that the stranger should have too low a conception of his daughter's powers; "thou art not destitute of gifts; rather, thou art endowed beyond the measure of women; but thou hast withal the woman's delicate frame, which ever craves repose and variety, and so begets a wandering imagination. My daughter"—turning to Tito—"has been very precious to me, filling up to the best of her power the place of a son. For I had once a son ——"

Bardo checked himself: he did not wish to assume an attitude of complaint in the presence of a stranger, and he remembered that this young man, in whom he had unexpectedly become so much interested, was still a stranger, toward whom it became him rather to keep the position of a patron. His pride was roused to double activity by the fear that he had forgotten his dignity.

"But," he resumed, in his original tone of condescension, "we are departing from what I believe is to you the most important business. Nello informed me that you had certain gems which you would fain dispose of, and that you desired a passport to some man of wealth and taste who would be likely to become a purchaser."

"It is true; for, though I have obtained employment, as a corrector with the Cennini, my payment leaves little margin beyond the provision of necessities, and would leave less but that my good friend Nello insists on my hiring a lodging from him, and saying nothing about the rent till better days."

"Nello is a good-hearted prodigal," said Bardo; "and though, with that ready ear and ready tongue of his, he is too much like the ill-famed Margites—knowing many things and knowing them all badly, as I hinted to him but now—he is nevertheless 'abnormis sapiens,' after the manner of our born Florentines. But have you the gems with you? I would willingly know what they are—yet it is useless: no, it might only deepen regret. I cannot add to my store."

"I have one or two intaglios of much beauty," said Tito, proceeding to draw from his wallet a small case.

But Romola no sooner saw the movement than she looked at him with significant gravity, and placed her finger on her lips,

If Bardo were made aware that the gems were within reach, she knew well he would want a minute description of them, and it would become pain to him that they should go away from him, even if he did not insist on some device for purchasing them in spite of poverty. But she had no sooner made this sign than she felt rather guilty and ashamed at having virtually confessed a weakness of her father's to a stranger. It seemed that she was destined to a sudden confidence and familiarity with this young Greek, strangely at variance with her deep-seated pride and reserve; and this consciousness again brought the unwonted color to her cheeks.

Tito understood her look and sign, and immediately withdrew his hand from the case, saying, in a careless tone, so as to make it appear that he was merely following up his last words, "But they are usually in the keeping of Messer Domenico Cennini, who has strong and safe places for these things. He estimates them as worth at least five hundred ducats."

"Ah, then, they are fine intagli," said Bardo. "Five hundred ducats! Ah, more than a man's ransom!"

Tito gave a slight, almost imperceptible start, and opened his long dark eyes with questioning surprise at Bardo's blind face, as if his words—a mere phrase of common parlance, at a time when men were often being ransomed from slavery or imprisonment—had had some special meaning for him. But the next moment he looked toward Romola, as if her eyes must be her father's interpreters. She, intensely preoccupied with what related to her father, imagined that Tito was looking to her again for some guidance, and immediately spoke.

"Alessandra Scala delights in gems, you know, father; she calls them her winter flowers; and the Segretario would be almost sure to buy any gems that she wished for. Besides, he himself sets great store by rings and sigils, which he wears as a defense against pains in the joints."

"It is true," said Bardo. "Bartolommeo has overmuch confidence in the efficacy of gems—a confidence wider than what is sanctioned by Pliny, who clearly shows that he regards many beliefs of that sort as idle superstitions; though not to the utter denial of medicinal virtues in gems. Wherefore, I myself, as you observe, young man, wear certain rings, which the discreet Camillo Leonardi prescribed to me by letter when two years ago I had a certain infirmity of sudden numbness. But thou hast spoken

well, Romola. I will dictate a letter to Bartolommeo, which Maso shall carry. But it were well that Messere should notify to thee what the gems are, together with the intagli they bear, as a warrant to Bartolommeo that they will be worthy of his attention."

"Nay, father," said Romola, whose dread lest a paroxysm of the collector's mania should seize her father, gave her the courage to resist his proposal. "Your word will be sufficient that Messere is a scholar and has traveled much. The Segretario will need no further inducement to receive him."

"True, child," said Bardo, touched on a chord that was sure to respond. "I have no need to add proofs and arguments in confirmation of my word to Bartolommeo. And I doubt not that this young man's presence is in accord with the tones of his voice, so that, the door being once opened, he will be his own best advocate."

Bardo paused a few moments, but his silence was evidently charged with some idea that he was hesitating to express, for he once leaned forward a little as if he were going to speak, then turned his head aside toward Romola and sank backward again. At last, as if he had made up his mind, he said in a tone which might have become a prince giving the courteous signal of dismissal—

"I am somewhat fatigued this morning, and shall prefer seeing you again to-morrow, when I shall be able to give you the secretary's answer, authorizing you to present yourself to him at some given time. But before you go"—here the old man, in spite of himself, fell into a more faltering tone—"you will perhaps permit me to touch your hand? It is long since I touched the hand of a young man."

Bardo had stretched out his aged white hand, and Tito immediately placed his dark but delicate and supple fingers within it. Bardo's cramped fingers closed over them, and he held them for a few minutes in silence. Then he said—

"Romola, has this young man the same complexion as thy brother—fair and pale?"

"No, father," Romola answered, with determined composure, though her heart began to beat violently with mingled emotions. "The hair of Messere is dark—his complexion is dark." Inwardly she said, "Will he mind it? will it be disagreeable? No, he looks so gentle and good-natured." Then aloud again—

"Would Messere permit my father to touch his hair and face?"

Her eyes inevitably made a timid entreating appeal while she asked this, and Tito's met them with soft brightness as he said, "Assuredly," and, leaning forward, raised Bardo's hand to his curls, with a readiness of assent, which was the greater relief to her, because it was unaccompanied by any sign of embarrassment.

Bardo passed his hand again and again over the long curls and grasped them a little, as if their spiral resistance made his inward vision clearer; then he passed his hand over the brow and cheek, tracing the profile with the edge of his palm and fourth finger, and letting the breadth of his hand repose on the rich oval of the cheek.

"Ah," he said, as his hand glided from the face and rested on the young man's shoulder, "he must be very unlike thy brother, Romola: and it is the better. You see no visions, I trust, my young friend?"

At this moment the door opened, and there entered, unannounced, a tall elderly man in a handsome black silk lucco, who, unwinding his becchetto from his neck and taking off his cap, disclosed a head as white as Bardo's. He cast a keen glance of surprise at the group before him—the young stranger leaning in that filial attitude, while Bardo's hand rested on his shoulder, and Romola sitting near with eyes dilated by anxiety and agitation. But there was an instantaneous change: Bardo let fall his hand, Tito raised himself from his stooping posture, and Romola rose to meet the visitor with an alacrity which implied all the greater intimacy, because it was unaccompanied by any smile.

"Well, god-daughter," said the stately man, as he touched Romola's shoulder; "Maso said you had a visitor, but I came in nevertheless."

"It is thou, Bernardo," said Bardo. "Thou art come at a fortunate moment. This young man," he continued, while Tito rose and bowed, "is one of the chief citizens of Florence, Messer Barnardo del Nero, my oldest, I had almost said my only friend—whose good opinion, if you can win it, may carry you far. He is but three-and-twenty, Bernardo, yet he can doubtless tell thee much which thou wilt care to hear; for though a scholar, he has already traveled far, and looked on other things besides the manuscripts for which thou hast too light an esteem."

"Ah, a Greek, as I augur," said Bernardo, returning

Tito's reverence but slightly, and surveying him with that sort of glance which seems almost to cut like fine steel.

"Newly arrived in Florence, it appears. The name of Messere—or part of it, for it is doubtless a long one?"

"On the contrary," said Tito, with perfect good-humor, "it is most modestly free from polysyllabic pomp. My name is Tito Melema."

"Truly?" said Bernardo, rather scornfully, as he took a seat; "I had expected it to be at least as long as the names of a city, a river, a province, and an empire all put together. We Florentines mostly use names as we do prawns, and strip them of all flourishes before we trust them to our throats."

"Well, Bardo," he continued, as if the stranger were not worth further notice, and changing his tone of sarcastic suspicion for one of sadness, "we have buried him."

"Ah!" replied Bardo, with corresponding sadness, "and a new epoch has come for Florence—a dark one, I fear. Lorenzo has left behind him an inheritance that is but like the alchemist's laboratory when the wisdom of the alchemist is gone."

"Not altogether so," said Bernardo. "Piero de Medici has abundant intelligence; his faults are only the faults of hot blood. I love the lad—lad he will always be to me, as I have always been 'little father' to him."

"Yet all who want a new order of things are likely to conceive new hopes," said Bardo. "We shall have the old strife of parties, I fear."

"If we could have a new order of things that was something else than knocking down one coat of arms to put up another," said Bernardo, "I should be ready to say, 'I belong to no party: I am a Florentine.' But as long as parties are in question, I am a Medicean, and will be a Medicean till I die. I am of the same mind as Farinata degli Uberti: if any man asks me what is meant by siding with a party, I say, as he did, 'To wish ill or well, for the sake of past wrongs or kindnesses.'"

During this short dialogue, Tito had been standing, and now took his leave.

"But come again at the same hour to-morrow," said Bardo, graciously, before Tito left the room, "that I may give you Bartolommeo's answer."

"From what quarter of the sky has this pretty Greek youngster alighted so close to thy chair, Bardo?" said Bernardo del Nero, as the door closed. He spoke with

dry emphasis, evidently intended to convey something more to Bardo than was implied by the mere words.

"He is a scholar who has been shipwrecked and has saved a few gems, for which he wants to find a purchaser. I am going to send him to Bartolommeo Scala, for thou knowest it were more prudent in me to abstain from further purchases."

Bernardo shrugged his shoulders and said, "Romola, wilt thou see if my servant is without? I ordered him to wait for me here." Then, when Romola was at a sufficient distance, he leaned forward and said to Bardo in a low, emphatic tone—

"Remember, Bardo, thou hast a rare gem of thy own; take care no one gets it who is not likely to pay a worthy price. That pretty Greek has a lithe sleekness about him that seems marvelously fitted for slipping easily into any nest he fixes his mind on."

Bardo was startled: the association of Tito with the image of his lost son had excluded instead of suggesting the thought of Romola. But almost immediately there seemed to be a reaction which made him grasp the warning as if it had been a hope.

"But why not, Bernardo? If the young man approved himself worthy—he is a scholar—and—and there would be no difficulty about the dowry, which always makes thee gloomy."

CHAPTER VII.

A LEARNED SQUABBLE.

BARTOLOMMEO SCALA, secretary of the Florentine Republic, on whom Tito Melema had been thus led to anchor his hopes, lived in a handsome palace close to the Porta Pinti, now known as the Casa Gherardesca. His arms—an azure ladder transverse on a golden field, with the motto *Gradatim* placed over the entrance—told all comers that the miller's son held his ascent to honors by his own efforts, a fact to be proclaimed without wincing. The secretary was a vain and pompous man, but he was also an honest one: he was sincerely convinced of his own merit, and could see no reason for feigning. The topmost round of his azure ladder had been reached by this time: he had

held his secretaryship these twenty years — had long since made his orations on the *ringhiera*, or platform of the Old Palace, as the custom was, in the presence of princely visitors, while Marzocco, the republican lion, wore his gold crown on the occasion, and all the people cried, “Viva Messer Bartolommeo!” — had been on an embassy to Rome, and had there been made titular Senator, Apostolical Secretary, Knight of the Golden Spur; and had, eight years ago, been Gonfaloniere — last goal of the Florentine citizen’s ambition. Meantime he had got richer and richer, and more and more gouty, after the manner of successful mortality; and the Knight of the Golden Spur had often to sit with helpless cushioned heel under the handsome loggia he had built for himself, overlooking the spacious gardens and lawn at the back of his palace.

He was in this position on the day when he had granted the desired interview to Tito Melema. The May afternoon sun was on the flowers and the grass beyond the pleasant shade of the loggia; the too stately silk lucco was cast aside, and the light loose mantle was thrown over his tunic; his beautiful daughter Alessandra and her husband, the Greek soldier-poet Marullo, were seated on one side of him: on the other, two friends not oppressively illustrious, and therefore the better listeners. Yet, to say nothing of the gout, Messer Bartolommeo’s felicity was far from perfect: it was embittered by the contents of certain papers that lay before him, consisting chiefly of a correspondence between himself and Politian. It was a human foible at that period (incredible as it may seem) to recite quarrels, and favor scholarly visitors with the communication of an entire and lengthy correspondence; and this was neither the first nor the second time that Scala had asked the candid opinion of his friends as to the balance of right and wrong in some half-score Latin letters between himself and Politian, all springing out of certain epigrams written in the most playful tone in the world. It was the story of a very typical and pretty quarrel, in which we are interested, because it supplied precisely that thistle of hatred necessary, according to Nello, as a stimulus to the sluggish paces of the cautious steed; Friendship.

Politian, having been a rejected pretender to the love and the hand of Scala’s daughter, kept a very sharp and learned tooth in readiness against the too prosperous and presumptuous secretary, who had declined the greatest scholar of the age for a son-in-law. Scala was a meri-

torious public servant, and, moreover, a lucky man—naturally exasperating to an offended scholar; but then—O beautiful balance of things!—he had an itch for authorship, and was a bad writer—one of those excellent people who, sitting in gouty slippers, “penned poetical trifles” entirely for their own amusement, without any view to an audience, and, consequently, sent them to their friends in letters, which were the literary periodicals of the fifteenth century. Now Scala had abundance of friends who were ready to praise his writings: friends like Ficino and Landino—amiable browsers in the Medicean park along with himself—who found his Latin prose style elegant and masculine; and the terrible Joseph Scaliger, who was to pronounce him totally ignorant of Latinity, was at a comfortable distance in the next century. But when was the fatal coquetry inherent in superfluous authorship ever quite contented with the ready praise of friends? That critical supercilious Politian—a fellow-browser, who was far from amiable—must be made aware that the solid secretary showed, in his leisure hours, a pleasant fertility in verses, which indicated pretty clearly how much he might do in that way if he were not a man of affairs.

Ineffable moment! when the man you secretly hate sends you a Latin epigram with a false gender—hendecasyllables with a questionable elision, at least a toe too much—attempts at poetic figures which are manifest solecisms. That moment had come to Politian: the secretary had put forth his soft head from the official shell, and the terrible lurking crab was down upon him. Politian had used the freedom of a friend, and pleasantly, in the form of a Latin epigram corrected the mistake of Scala in making the *culex* (an insect too well known on the banks of the Arno) of the inferior or feminine gender. Scala replied by a bad joke, in suitable Latin verses, referring to Politian’s unsuccessful suit. Better and better. Politian found the verses very pretty and highly facetious: the more was the pity that they were seriously incorrect, and inasmuch as Scala had alleged that he had written them in imitation of a Greek epigram, Politian, being on such friendly terms, would enclose a Greek epigram of his own, on the same interesting insect—not, we may presume, out of any wish to humble Scala, but rather to instruct him; said epigram containing a lively conceit about Venus, Cupid, and the *culex*, of a kind much tasted at that period, founded partly on the zoological fact that the

looking like a truncated tower roofed in with fluted tiles, and close by was a small outhouse, apparently built up against a piece of ruined stone wall. Under a large half-dead mulberry-tree that was now sending its last fluttering leaves in at the open doorways, a shriveled, hardy old woman was untying a goat with two kids, and Baldassarre could see that part of the outbuilding was occupied by live stock; but the door of the other part was open, and it was empty of everything but some tools and straw. It was just the sort of place he wanted. He spoke to the old woman; but it was not till he got close to her and shouted in her ear, that he succeeded in making her understand his want of a lodging, and his readiness to pay for it. At first he could get no answer beyond shakes of the head and the words, "No—no lodging," uttered in the muffled tone of the deaf. But, by dint of persistence, he made clear to her that he was a poor stranger from a long way over seas, and could not afford to go to hostleries; that he only wanted to lie on the straw in the outhouse, and would pay her a quattrino or two a week for that shelter. She still looked at him dubiously, shaking her head and talking low to herself; but presently, as if a new thought occurred to her, she fetched a hatchet from the house, and, showing him a chump that lay half covered with litter in a corner, asked him if he would chop that up for her: if he would, he might lie in the outhouse for one night. He agreed, and Monna Lisa stood with her arms akimbo to watch him, with a smile of gratified cunning, saying low to herself—

"It's lain there ever since my old man died. What then? I might as well have put a stone on the fire. He chops very well, though he does speak with a foreign tongue, and looks odd. I couldn't have got it done cheaper. And if he only wants a bit of straw to lie on, I might make him do an errand or two up and down the hill. Who need know? And sin that's hidden's half forgiven.* He's a stranger: he'll take no notice of *her*. And I'll tell her to keep her tongue still."

The antecedent to these feminine pronouns had a pair of blue eyes, which at that moment were applied to a large round hole in the shutter of the upper window. The shutter was closed, not for any penal reasons, but because only the opposite window had the luxury of glass in it; the weather was not warm, and a round hole four inches in diameter served all the purposes of observation. The hole was,

*"Peccato celato è mezzo perdonato."

ment on that head—which furnished a Greek quotation to serve as powder to his bullet.

The quarrel could not end there. The logic could hardly get worse, but the secretary got more pompously self-asserting, and the scholarly poet's temper more and more venomous. Politian had been generously willing to hold up a mirror, by which the too-inflated secretary, beholding his own likeness, might be induced to cease setting up his ignorant defenses of bad Latin against ancient authorities whom the consent of centuries had placed beyond question,—unless, indeed, he had designed to sink in literature in proportion as he rose in honors, that by a sort of compensation men of letters might feel themselves his equals. In return, Politian was begged to examine Scala's writings: nowhere would he find a more devout admiration of antiquity. The secretary was ashamed of the age in which he lived, and blushed for it. *Some*, indeed, there were who wanted to have their own works praised and exalted to a level with the divine monuments of antiquity; but he, Scala, could not oblige them. And as to the honors which were offensive to the envious, they had been well earned: witness his whole life since he came in penury to Florence. The elegant scholar, in reply, was not surprised that Scala found the age distasteful to him, since he himself was so distasteful to the age; nay, it was with perfect accuracy that he, the elegant scholar, had called Scala a branny monster, inasmuch as he was formed from the offscourings of monsters, born amidst the refuse of a mill, and eminently worthy the long-eared office of turning the paternal millstones (*in pistrini sordibus natus et quidem pistrino dignissimus*)!

It was not without reference to Tito's appointed visit that the papers containing this correspondence were brought out to-day. Here was a new Greek scholar whose accomplishments were to be tested, and on nothing did Scala more desire a dispassionate opinion from persons of superior knowledge than on that Greek epigram of Politian's. After sufficient introductory talk concerning Tito's travels after a survey and discussion of the gems, and an easy passage from the mention of the lamented Lorenzo's eagerness in collecting such specimens of ancient art to the subject of classical tastes and studies in general and their present condition in Florence, it was inevitable to mention Politian, a man of eminent ability indeed, but a little too arrogant—assum-

ing to be a Hercules, whose office it was to destroy all the literary monstrosities of the age, and writing letters to his elders without signing them, as if they were miraculous revelations that could only have one source. And after all, were not his own criticisms often questionable and his tastes perverse? He was fond of saying pungent things about the men who thought they wrote like Cicero because they ended every sentence with "esse videtur": but while he was boasting of his freedom from servile imitation, did he not fall into the other extreme, running after strange words and affected phrases? Even in his much belauded 'Miscellanea' was every point tenable? And Tito, who had just been looking into the 'Miscellanea,' found so much to say that was agreeable to the secretary—he would have done so from the mere disposition to please, without further motive—that he showed himself quite worthy to be made a judge in the notable correspondence concerning the *culex*. Here was the Greek epigram which Politian had doubtless thought the finest in the world, though he had pretended to believe that the "transmarini," the Greeks themselves, would make light of it: had he not been unintentionally speaking the truth in his false modesty?

Tito was ready, and sacrificed the epigram to Scala's content. O wise young judge! He could doubtless appreciate satire even in the vulgar tongue, and Scala—who, excellent man, not seeking publicity through the booksellers, was never unprovided with "hasty uncorrected trifles," as a sort of sherbet for a visitor on a hot day, or, if the weather were cold, why then as a cordial—had a few little matters in the shape of Sonnets, turning on well-known foibles of Politians, which he would not like to go any farther, but which would perhaps, amuse the company.

Enough: Tito took his leave under an urgent invitation to come again. His gems were interesting; especially the agate, with the *lusus naturæ* in it—a most wonderful semblance of Cupid riding on the lion; and the "Jew's stone," with the lion-headed serpent enchased in it; both of which the secretary agreed to buy—the latter as a reinforcement of his preventives against the gout, which gave him such severe twinges that it was plain enough how intolerable it would be if he were not well supplied with rings of rare virtue, and with an amulet worn close under the right breast. But Tito was assured that he himself was more interesting than his gems. He had won his way to the

Scala Palace by the recommendation of Bardo de' Bardi, who, to be sure, was Scala's old acquaintance and a worthy scholar, in spite of his overvaluing himself a little (a frequent foible in the secretary's friends); but he must come again on the ground of his own manifest accomplishments.

The interview could hardly have ended more auspiciously for Tito, and as he walked out at the Porta Pinti that he might laugh a little at his ease over the affair of the *culex*, he felt that fortune could hardly mean to turn her back on him again at present, since she had taken him by the hand in this decided way.

CHAPTER VIII.

FACE IN THE CROWD.

IT is easy to northern people to rise early on Midsummer morning, to see the dew on the grassy edge of the dusty pathway, to notice the fresh shoots among the darker green of the oak and fir in the coppice, and to look over the gate at the shorn meadow, without recollecting that it is the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

Not so to the Florentine—still less to the Florentine of the fifteenth century: to him, on that particular morning, the brightness of the eastern sun on the Arno had something special in it; the ringing of the bells was articulate, and declared it to be the great summer festival of Florence, the day of San Giovanni.

San Giovanni had been the patron saint of Florence for at least eight hundred years—ever since the time when the Lombard Queen Theodolinda had commanded her subjects to do him peculiar honor; nay, says old Villani, to the best of his knowledge, ever since the days of Constantine the Great and Pope Sylvester, when the Florentines deposed their idol Mars, whom they were nevertheless careful not to treat with contumely; for while they consecrated their beautiful and noble temple to the honor of God and of the “Beato Messere Santo Giovanni,” they placed old Mars respectfully on a high tower near the River Arno, finding in certain ancient memorials that he had been elected as their tutelar deity under such astral influences that, if he were broken, or otherwise treated with indig-

nity, the city would suffer great damage and mutation. But, in the fifteenth century, that discreet regard to the feelings of the Man-destroyer had long vanished: the god of the spear and shield had ceased to frown by the side of the Arno, and the defenses of the Republic were held to lie in its craft and its coffers. For spear and shield could be hired by gold florins, and on the gold florins there had always been the image of San Giovanni.

Much good had come to Florence since the dim time of struggle between the old patron and the new: some quarreling and bloodshed, doubtless, between Guelf and Ghibelline, between Black and White, between orthodox sons of the Church and heretic Paterini; some floods, famine, and pestilence; but still much wealth and glory. Florence had achieved conquests over walled cities once mightier than itself, and especially over hated Pisa, whose marble buildings were too high and beautiful, whose masts were too much honored on Greek and Italian coasts. The name of Florence had been growing prouder and prouder in all the courts of Europe, nay, in Africa itself, on the strength of purest gold coinage, finest dyes and textures, pre-eminent scholarship and poetic genius, and wits of the most serviceable sort for statesmanship and banking: it was a name so omnipresent that a Pope with a turn for epigram had called Florentines "the fifth element." And for this high destiny, though it might partly depend on the stars and Madonna dell Impruneta, and certainly depended on other higher powers less often named, the praise was greatly due to San Giovanni, whose image was on the fair gold florins.

Therefore it was fitting that the day of San Giovanni — that ancient Church festival already venerable in the days of St. Augustine — should be a day of peculiar rejoicing to Florence, and should be ushered in by a vigil duly kept in strict old Florentine fashion, with much dancing, with much street jesting, and perhaps with not a little stone-throwing and window-breaking, but emphatically with certain street sights such as could only be provided by a city which held in its service a clever Cecca, engineer and architect, valuable alike in sieges and in shows. By the help of Cecca, the very saints, surrounded with their almond-shaped glory, and floating on clouds with their joyous companionship of winged cherubs, even as they may be seen to this day in the pictures of Perugino, seemed, on the eve of San Giovanni, to have brought their piece of

the heavens down into the narrow streets, and to pass slowly through them; and, more wonderful still, saints of gigantic size, with attendant angels, might be seen, not seated, but moving in a slow, mysterious manner along the streets, like a procession of colossal figures come down from the high domes and tribunes of the churches. The clouds were made of good woven stuff, the saints and cherubs were unglorified mortals supported by firm bars, and those mysterious giants were really men of very steady brain, balancing themselves on stilts, and enlarged, like Greek tragedians, by huge masks and stuffed shoulders; but he was a miserably unimaginative Florentine who thought only of that — nay, somewhat impious, for in the images of sacred things was there not some of the virtue of sacred things themselves? And if, after that, there came a company of merry black demons well armed with claws and thongs, and other implements of sport, ready to perform impromptu farces of bastinadoing and clothes-tearing, why, that was the demons' way of keeping a vigil, and they, too, might have descended from the domes and the tribunes. The Tuscan mind slipped from the devout to the burlesque, as readily as water round an angle; and the saints had already had their turn, had gone their way, and made their due pause before the gates of San Giovanni, to do him honor on the eve of his *fiesta*. And on the morrow, the great day thus ushered in, it was fitting that the tributary symbols paid to Florence by all its dependent cities, districts, and villages, whether conquered, protected, or of immemorial possession, should be offered at the shrine of San Giovanni in the old octagonal church, once the cathedral and now the baptistery, where every Florentine had had the sign of the Cross made with the anointing chrism on his brow; that all the city, from the white-haired man to the stripling, and from the matron to the lisping child, should be clothed in its best to do honor to the great day, and see the great sight; and that again, when the sun was sloping and the streets were cool, there should be the glorious race of Corso, when the unsaddled horses, clothed in rich trappings, should run right across the city, from the Porta al Prato on the northwest, through the Mercato Vecchio, to the Porta Santa Croce on the southeast, where the richest of *Palii*, or velvet and brocade banners with silk linings and fringe of gold, such as became a city that half clothed the well-dressed world, were mounted on a triumphal car awaiting the winner or winner's owner.

And thereafter followed more dancing; nay, through the whole day, says an old chronicler at the beginning of that century, there were weddings and the grandest gatherings, with so much piping, music and song, with balls and feasts and gladness and ornament, that this earth might have been mistaken for Paradise!

In this year of 1492, it was, perhaps, a little less easy to make that mistake. Lorenzo the magnificent and subtle was dead, and an arrogant, incautious Piero was come in his room, an evil change for Florence, unless, indeed, the wise horse prefers the bad rider, as more easily thrown from the saddle; and already the regrets for Lorenzo were getting less predominant over the murmured desire for government on a broader basis, in which corruption might be arrested, and there might be that free play for everybody's jealousy and ambition, which made the ideal liberty of the good old quarrelsome, struggling times, when Florence raised her great buildings, reared her own soldiers, drove out would-be tyrants at the sword's point, and was proud to keep faith at her own loss. Lorenzo was dead, Pope Innocent was dying, and a troublesome Neapolitan succession, with an intriguing, ambitious Milan, might set Italy by the ears before long: the times were likely to be difficult. Still, there was all the more reason that the Republic should keep its religious festivals.

And Midsummer morning, in this year, 1492, was not less bright than usual. It was betimes in the morning that the symbolic offerings to be carried in grand procession were all assembled at their starting-point in the Piazza della Signoria—that famous piazza, where stood then, and stand now, the massive turreted Palace of the People, called the Palazzo Vecchio, and the spacious Loggia, built by Orcagna—the scene of all grand State ceremonial. The sky made the fairest blue tent, and under it the bells swung so vigorously that every evil spirit with sense enough to be formidable, must long since have taken his flight; windows and terraced roofs were alive with human faces; sombre stone houses were bright with hanging draperies; the boldly soaring palace tower, the yet older square tower of the Bargello, and the spire of the neighboring Badia seemed to keep watch above; and below, on the broad polygonal flags of the piazza, was the glorious show of banners, and horses with rich trappings, and gigantic *ceri* or tapers, that were fitly called towers—strangely aggrandized descendants of those torches by

whose faint light the Church worshipped in the Catacombs. Betimes in the morning all processions had need to move under the Midsummer sky of Florence, where the shelter of the narrow streets must every now and then be exchanged for the glare of wide spaces; and the sun would be high up in the heavens before the long pomp had ended its pilgrimage in the Piazza di San Giovanni.

But here, where the procession was to pause, the magnificent city, with its ingenious Cecca, had provided another tent than the sky; for the whole of the Piazza del Duomo, from the octagonal baptistery in the centre to the façade of the cathedral and the walls of the houses on the other sides of the quadrangle, was covered, at the height of forty feet or more, with blue drapery, adorned with well-stitched yellow lilies and the familiar coats of arms, while sheaves of many-colored banners drooped at fit angles under this superincumbent blue—a gorgeous rainbow lit shelter to the waiting spectators who leaned from the windows, and made a narrow border on the pavement, and wished for the coming of the show.

One of these spectators was Tito Melema. Bright, in the midst of brightness, he sat at the window of the room above Nello's shop, his right elbow resting on the red drapery hanging from the window-sill, and his head supported in a backward position by the right hand, which pressed the curls against his ear. His face wore that bland liveliness, as far removed from excitability as from heaviness or gloom, which marks the companion popular alike amongst men and women—the companion who is never obtrusive or noisy from uneasy vanity or excessive animal spirits, and whose brow is never contracted by resentment or indignation. He showed no other change from the two months and more that had passed since his first appearance in the weather-stained tunic and hose, than that added radiance of good fortune, which is like the just perceptible perfecting of a flower after it has drunk a morning's sunbeams. Close behind him, ensconced in the narrow angle between his chair and the window-frame, stood the slim figure of Nello in holiday suit, and at his left the younger Cennini—Pietro, the erudite corrector of proof-sheets, not Domenico the practical. Tito was looking alternately down on the scene below, and upward at the varied knot of gazers and talkers immediately around him, some of whom had come in after witnessing the commencement of the procession in the Piazza della Signoria. Piero

di Cosimo was raising a laugh among them by his grimaces and anathemas at the noise of the bells, against which no kind of ear-stuffing was a sufficient barricade, since the more he stuffed his ears the more he felt the vibration of his skull; and declaring that he would bury himself in the most solitary spot of the Valdarno on a *fiesta*, if he were not condemned, as a painter, to lie in wait for the secrets of color that were sometimes to be caught from the floating of banners and the chance grouping of the multitude.

Tito had just turned his laughing face away from the whimsical painter to look down at the small drama going on among the checkered border of spectators, when at the angle of the marble steps in front of the Duomo, nearly opposite Nello's shop, he saw a man's face upturned toward him, and fixing on him a gaze that seemed to have more meaning in it than the ordinary passing observation of a stranger. It was a face with tonsured head, that rose above the black mantle and white tunic of a Dominican friar—a very common sight in Florence; but the glance had something peculiar in it for Tito. There was a faint suggestion in it, certainly not of an unpleasant kind. Yet what pleasant association had he ever had with monks? None. The glance and the suggestion hardly took longer than a flash of lightning.

"Nello!" said Tito, hastily, but immediately added, in a tone of disappointment, "Ah, he has turned round. It was that tall, thin friar who is going up the steps. I wanted you to tell me if you knew aught of him?"

"One of the Frati Predicatori," said Nello, carelessly; "you don't expect me to know the private history of the crows."

"I seem to remember something about his face," said Tito. "It is an uncommon face."

"What? you thought it might be our Fra Girolamo? Too tall; and he never shows himself in that chance way."

"Besides, that loud-barking 'hound of the Lord'* is not in Florence just now," said Francesco Cei, the popular poet; "he has taken Piero de' Medici's hint, to carry his railing prophecies on a journey for a while."

"The Frate neither rails nor prophesies against any man," said a middle-aged personage seated at the other corner of the window; "he only prophesies against vice."

* A play on the name of the Dominicans (*Domini Canes*) which was accepted by themselves, and which is pictorially represented in a fresco painted for them by Simone Memmi.

If you think that an attack on your poems, Francesco, it is not the Frate's fault."

"Ah, he's gone into the Duomo, now," said Tito, who had watched the figure eagerly. "No, I was not under that mistake, Nello. Your Fra Girolamo has a high nose and a large under-lip. I saw him once—he is not handsome; but this man ——"

"Truce to your descriptions!" said Cennini. "Hark! see! Here come the horsemen and the banners. That standard," he continued, laying his hand familiarly on Tito's shoulder—"that carried on the horse with white trappings—that with the red eagle holding the green dragon between his talons, and the red lily over the eagle—is the Gonfalon of the Guelf party, and those cavaliers close round it are the chief officers of the Guelf party. That is one of our proudest banners, grumble as we may; it means the triumph of the Guelfs, which means the triumph of Florentine will, which means the triumph of the popolani."

"Nay, go on, Cennini," said the middle-aged man, seated at the window, "which means triumph of the fat popolani over the lean, which again means triumph of the fattest popolani over those who are less fat."

"Cronaca, you are becoming sententious," said the printer; "Fra Girolamo's preaching will spoil you, and make you take life by the wrong handle. Trust me, your cornices will lose half their beauty if you begin to mingle bitterness with them; that is the *maniera Tedesca* which you used to declaim against when you came from Rome. The next palace you build we shall see you trying to put the Frate's doctrine into stone."

"That is a goodly show of cavaliers," said Tito, who had learned by this time the best way to please Florentines; "but are there not strangers among them? I see foreign costumes."

"Assuredly," said Cennini; "you see there the Orators from France, Milan, and Venice, and behind them are English and German nobles; for it is customary that all foreign visitors of distinction pay their tribute to San Giovanni in the train of that gonfalon. For my part, I think our Florentine cavaliers sit their horses as well as any of those cut-and-thrust northerners, whose wits lie in their heels and saddles; and for yon Venetian, I fancy he would feel himself more at ease on the back of a dolphin. We ought to know something of horsemanship, for we excel all

Italy in the sports of the Giostra, and the money we spend on them. But you will see a finer show of our chief men by-and-by, Melema; my brother himself will be among the officers of the Zecca."

"The banners are the better sight," said Piero di Cosimo, forgetting the noise in his delight at the winding stream of color as the tributary standards advanced round the piazza. "The Florentine men are so-so; they make but a sorry show at this distance with their patch of sallow flesh-tint above the black garments; but those banners with their velvet, and satin, and minever, and brocade, and their endless play of delicate light and shadow!—*Va!* your human talk and doings are a tame jest; the only passionate life is in form and color."

"Ay, Piero, if Satanasso could paint, thou wouldst sell thy soul to learn his secrets," said Nello. "But there is little likelihood of it, seeing the blessed angels themselves are such poor hands at chiaroscuro, if one may judge from their *capo-d'opera*, the Madonna Nunziata."

"There go the banners of Pisa and Arezzo," said Cennini. "Ay, Messer Pisano, it is no use for you to look sullen; you may as well carry your banner to our San Giovanni with a good grace. 'Pisans false, Florentines blind'—the second half of that proverb will hold no longer. There come the ensigns of our subject towns and signories, Melema; they will all be suspended in San Giovanni until this day next year, when they will give place to new ones."

"They are a fair sight," said Tito; "and San Giovanni will surely be as well satisfied with that produce of Italian looms as Minerva with her peplos, especially as he contents himself with so little drapery. But my eyes are less delighted with those whirling towers, which would soon make me fall from the window in sympathetic vertigo."

The "towers" of which Tito spoke were a part of the procession esteemed very glorious by the Florentine populace; and being perhaps chiefly a kind of hyperbole for the all-efficacious wax taper, were also called *ceri*. But inasmuch as hyperbole is impracticable in a real and literal fashion, these gigantic *ceri*, some of them so large as to be of necessity carried on wheels, were not solid but hollow, and had their surface made not solely of wax, but of wood and pasteboard, gilded, carved, and painted, as real sacred tapers often are, with successive circles of figures—warriors on horseback, foot-soldiers with lance and shield, dancing maidens, animals, trees and fruits, and in fine, says the old

chronicler, "all things that could delight the eye and the heart"; the hollowness having the further advantage that men could stand inside these hyperbolic tapers and whirl them continually, so as to produce a phantasmagoric effect, which, considering the towers were numerous, must have been calculated to produce dizziness on a truly magnificent scale.

"*Pestilenza!*" said Piero di Cosimo, moving from the window, "those whirling circles one above the other are worse than the jangling of all the bells. Let me know when the last taper has passed."

"Nay, you will surely like to be called when the contadini come carrying their torches," said Nello; "you would not miss the country-folk of the Mugello and the Casentino, of whom your favorite Lionardo would make a hundred grotesque sketches."

"No," said Piero, resolutely, "I will see nothing till the car of the Zecca comes. I have seen clowns enough holding tapers aslant, both with and without cowls, to last me for my life."

"Here it comes, then, Piero—the car of the Zecca," called out Nello, after an interval during which towers and tapers in a descending scale of size had been making their slow transit.

"*Fediddio!*" exclaimed Francesco Cei, "that is a well-tanned San Giovanni! some sturdy Romagnole beggar-man, I'll warrant. Our Signoria plays the host to all the Jewish and Christian scum that every other city shuts its gates against, and lets them fatten on us like St. Anthony's swine."

The car of the Zecca or Mint, which had just rolled into sight, was originally an immense wooden tower or *cero* adorned after the same fashion as the other tributary *ceri*, mounted on a splendid car, and drawn by two mouse-colored oxen, whose mild heads looked out from rich trappings bearing the arms of the Zecca. But the latter half of the century was getting rather ashamed of the towers with their circular or spiral paintings, which had delighted the eyes and the hearts of the other half, so that they had become a contemptuous proverb, and any ill-painted figure looking, as will sometimes happen to figures in the best ages of art, as if it had been boned for a pie, was called a *fantoccio da cero*, a tower-puppet; consequently improved taste, with Cecca to help it, had devised for the magnificent Zecca a triumphal car like a pyramidal catafalque,

with ingenious wheels warranted to turn all corners easily. Round the base were living figures of saints and angels arrayed in sculpturesque fashion; and on the summit, at the height of thirty feet, well bound to an iron rod and holding an iron cross also firmly infixed, stood a living representative of St. John the Baptist, with arms and legs bare, a garment of tiger-skins about his body, and a golden nimbus fastened on his head—as the Precursor was wont to appear in the cloisters and churches, not having yet revealed himself to painters as the brown and sturdy boy who made one of the Holy Family. For where could the image of the patron saint be more fitly placed than on the symbol of the Zecca? Was not the royal prerogative of coining money the surest token that a city had won its independence? and by the blessing of San Giovanni this “beautiful sheepfold” of his had shown that token earliest among the Italian cities. Nevertheless, the annual function of representing the patron saint was not among the high prizes of public life; it was paid for with something like ten shillings, a cake weighing fourteen pounds, two bottles of wine, and a handsome supply of light eatables; the money being furnished by the magnificent Zecca, and the payment in kind being by peculiar “privilege” presented in a basket suspended on a pole from an upper window of a private house, whereupon the eidolon of the austere saint at once invigorated himself with a reasonable share of the sweets and wine, threw the remnants to the crowd, and embraced the mighty cake securely with his right arm through the remainder of his passage. This was the attitude in which the mimic San Giovanni presented himself as the tall car jerked and vibrated on its slow way round the piazza to the northern gate of the Baptistery.

“There go the Masters of the Zecca, and there is my brother—you see him, Melema?” cried Cennini, with an agreeable stirring of pride at showing a stranger what was too familiar to be remarkable to fellow-citizens. “Behind come the members of the Corporation of Calimara,* the dealers in foreign cloth, to which we have given our Florentine finish; men of ripe years, you see, who were matriculated before you were born; and then comes the famous Art of Money-changers.”

“Many of them matriculated also to the noble art of usury before you were born,” interrupted Francesco Cei,

* “Arte di Calimara,” “arte” being, in this use of it, equivalent to corporation.

"as you may discern by a certain fitful glare of the eye and sharp curve of the nose which manifest their descent from the ancient Harpies, whose portraits you saw supporting the arms of the Zecca. Shaking off old prejudices now, such a procession as that of some four hundred passably ugly men carrying their tapers in open daylight, Diogenes-fashion, as if they were looking for a lost quatrin, would make a merry spectacle for the Feast of Fools."

"Blaspheme not against the usages of our city," said Pietro Cennini, much offended. "There are new wits who think they see things more truly because they stand on their heads to look at them, like tumblers and mountebanks instead of keeping the attitude of rational men. Doubtless it makes little difference to Maestro Vaiano's monkeys whether they see our Donatello's statue of Judith with their heads or their tails uppermost."

"Your solemnity will allow some quarter to playful fancy, I hope," said Cei, with a shrug, "else what becomes of the ancients, whose example you scholars are bound to revere, Messer Pietro? Life was never anything but a perpetual see-saw between gravity and jest."

"Keep your jest then till your end of the pole is uppermost," said Cennini, still angry, "and that is not when the great bond of our Republic is expressing itself in ancient symbols, without which the vulgar would be conscious of nothing beyond their own petty wants of back and stomach, and never rise to the sense of community in religion and law. There has been no great people without processions, and the man who thinks himself too wise to be moved by them to anything but contempt, is like the puddle that was proud of standing alone while the river rushed by."

No one said anything after this indignant burst of Cennini's till he himself spoke again.

"Hark! the trumpets of the Signoria: now comes the last stage of the show, Melema. That is our Gonfaloniere in the middle, in the starred mantle, with the sword carried before him. Twenty years ago we used to see our foreign Podestà, who was our judge in civil causes, walking on his right hand; but our Republic has been overdoctored by clever *Medici*. That is the Proposto* of the Priori on the left; then come the other seven Priori; then all the other magistracies and officials of our Republic. You see your patron the Segretario?"

* Spokesman or Moderator.

"There is Messer Bernardo del Nero also," said Tito: "his viage is a fine and venerable one, though it has worn rather a petrifying look toward me."

"Ah," said Nello, "he is the dragon that guards the remnant of old Bardo's gold, which, I fancy, is chiefly that virgin gold that falls about the fair Romola's head and shoulders; eh, my Apollino?" he added, patting Tito's head.

Tito had the youthful grace of blushing, but he had also the adroit and ready speech that prevents a blush from looking like embarrassment. He replied at once—

"And a very Pactolus it is—a stream with golden ripples. If I were an alchemist—"

He was saved from the need for further speech by the sudden fortissimo of drums and trumpets and fifes, bursting into the breadth of the piazza in a grand storm of sound—a roar, a blast, and a whistling, well befitting a city famous for its musical instruments, and reducing the members of the closest group to a state of deaf isolation.

During this interval Nello observed Tito's fingers moving in recognition of some one in the crowd below, but not seeing the direction of his glance he failed to detect the object of this greeting—the sweet round blue-eyed face under a white hood—immediately lost in the narrow border of heads, where there was a continual eclipse of round contadina cheeks by the harsh-lined features or bent shoulders of an old spadesman, and where profiles turned as sharply from north to south as weather-cocks under a shifting wind.

But when it was felt that the show was ended—when the twelve prisoners released in honor of the day, and the very *barberi* or race-horses, with the arms of their owners embroidered on their cloths, had followed up the Signoria, and been duly consecrated to San Giovanni, and every one was moving from the window—Nello, whose Florentine curiosity was of that lively, canine sort which thinks no trifle too despicable for investigation, put his hand on Tito's shoulder and said—

"What acquaintance was that you were making signals to, eh, *giovane mio*?"

"Some little contadina who probably mistook me for an acquaintance, for she had honored me with a greeting."

"Or who wished to begin an acquaintance," said Nello. "But you are bound for the Via de Bardi and the feast of the Muses: there is no counting on you for a frolic, else we

might have gone in search of adventures together in the crowd, and had some pleasant fooling in honor of San Giovanni. But your high fortune has come on you too soon: I don't mean the professor's mantle—*that* is roomy enough to hide a few stolen chickens, but—— Messer Endymion minded his manners after that singular good fortune of his; and what says our Luigi Pulci?

‘Da quel giorno in quà ch’amor m’accese
Per lei son fatto e gentile e cortese.’ ”

“Nello, *amico mio*, thou hast an intolerable trick of making life stale by forestalling it with thy talk,” said Tito, shrugging his shoulders, with the look of patient resignation, which was his nearest approach to anger: “not to mention that such ill founded babbling would be held a great offense by that same goddess whose humble worshipper you are always professing yourself.”

“I will be mute,” said Nello, laying his finger on his lips, with a responding shrug. “But it is only under our four eyes that I talk any folly about her.”

“Pardon! you were on the verge of it just now in the hearing of others. If you want to ruin me in the minds of Bardo and his daughter——”

“Enough, enough!” said Nello. “I am an absurd old barber. It all comes from that abstinence of mine, in not making bad verses in my youth: for want of letting my folly run out that way when I was eighteen, it runs out at my tongue’s end now I am at the unseemly age of fifty. But Nello has not got his head muffled for all that; he can see a buffalo in the snow. *Addio, giovane mio.*”

CHAPTER IX.

A MAN’S RANSOM.

TITO was soon down among the crowd, and, notwithstanding his indifferent reply to Nello’s question about his chance acquaintance, he was not without a passing wish, as he made his way round the piazza to the Corso degli Adimari, that he might encounter the pair of blue eyes which had looked up toward him from under the square bit of white linen drapery that formed the ordinary hood

of the contadina at festa time. He was perfectly well aware that that face was Tessa's; but he had not chosen to say so. What had Nello to do with the matter? Tito had an innate love of reticence—let us say a talent for it—which acted as other impulses do, without any conscious motive, and, like all people to whom concealment is easy, he would now and then conceal something which had as little the nature of a secret as the fact that he had seen a flight of crows.

But the passing wish about pretty Tessa was almost immediately eclipsed by the recurrent recollection of that friar whose face had some irrecoverable association for him. Why should a sickly fanatic, worn with fasting, have looked at *him* in particular, and where in all his travels could he remember encountering that face before? Folly! such vague memories hang about the mind like cobwebs, with tickling importunity—best to sweep them away with a dash: and Tito had preasanter occupation for his thoughts. By the time he was turning out of the Corso degli Adimari into a side-street he was caring only that the sun was high, and that the procession had kept him longer than he had intended from his visit to that room in the Via de Bardi, where his coming, he knew, was anxiously awaited. He felt the scene of his entrance beforehand: the joy beaming diffusedly in the blind face like the light in a semi-transparent lamp; the transient pink flush on Romola's face and neck, which subtracted nothing from her majesty, but only gave it the exquisite charm of womanly sensitiveness, heightened still more by what seemed the paradoxical boy-like frankness of her look and smile. They were the best comrades in the world during the hours they passed together round the blind man's chair: she was constantly appealing to Tito, and he was informing her, yet he felt himself strangely in subjection to Romola with that simplicity of hers: he felt for the first time, without defining it to himself, that loving awe in the presence of noble womanhood, which is perhaps something like the worship paid of old to a great nature-goddess, who was not all-knowing, but whose life and power were something deeper and more primordial than knowledge. They had never been alone together, and he could frame to himself no probable image of love-scenes between them: he could only fancy and wish wildly—what he knew was impossible—that Romola would some day tell him that she loved him. One day in Greece, as he was leaning over a wall in the sunshine, a little black-

eyed peasant girl, who had rested her water-pot on the wall, crept gradually nearer and nearer to him, and at last shyly asked him to kiss her, putting up her round olive cheek very innocently. Tito was used to love that came in this unsought fashion. But Romola's love would never come in that way: would it ever come at all?—and yet it was that topmost apple on which he had set his mind. He was in his fresh youth—not passionate, but impressible: it was as inevitable that he should feel lovingly toward Romola as that the white irises should be reflected in the clear sunlit stream; but he had no coxcombry, and he had an intimate sense that Romola was something very much above him. Many men have felt the same before a large-eyed, simple child.

Nevertheless, Tito had had the rapid success which would have made some men presuming, or would have warranted him in thinking that there would be no great presumption in entertaining an agreeable confidence that he might one day be the husband of Romola—nay, that her father himself was not without a vision of such a future for him. His first auspicious interview with Bartolommeo Scala had proved the commencement of a growing favor on the secretary's part, and had led to an issue which would have been enough to make Tito decide on Florence as the place in which to establish himself, even if it had held no other magnet. Politian was professor of Greek as well as Latin at Florence, professorial chairs being maintained there, although the university had been removed to Pisa; but for a long time Demetrio Calcondila, one of the most eminent and respectable among the emigrant Greeks, had also held a Greek chair, simultaneously with the too predominant Italian. Calcondila was now gone to Milan, and there was no counterpoise or rival to Politian such as was desired for him by the friends who wished him to be taught a little propriety and humility. Scala was far from being the only friend of this class, and he found several who, if they were not among those thirsty admirers of mediocrity that were glad to be refreshed with his verses in hot weather, were yet quite willing to join him in doing that moral service to Politian. It was finally agreed that Tito should be supported in a Greek chair, as Demetrio Calcondila had been by Lorenzo himself, who, being at the same time the affectionate patron of Politian, had shown by precedent that there was nothing invidious in such a measure, but only a zeal for

true learning and for the instruction of the Florentine youth.

Tito was thus sailing under the fairest breeze, and besides convincing fair judges that his talents squared with his good fortune, he wore that fortune so easily and unpretentiously that no one had yet been offended by it. He was not unlikely to get into the best Florentine society: society where there was much more plate than the circle of enameled silver in the centre of the brass dishes, and where it was not forbidden by the Signory to wear the richest brocade. For where could a handsome young scholar not be welcome when he could touch the lute and trol a gay song? That bright face, that easy smile, that liquid voice, seemed to give life a holiday aspect; just as a strain of gay music and the hoisting of colors make the work-worn and the sad rather ashamed of showing themselves. Here was a professor likely to render the Greek classics amiable to the sons of great houses.

And that was not the whole of Tito's good fortune; for he had sold all his jewels, except the ring he did not choose to part with, and he was master of full five hundred gold florins.

Yet the moment when he first had this sum in his possession was the crisis of the first serious struggle his facile, good-humored nature had known. An importunate thought, of which he had till now refused to see more than the shadow as it dogged his footsteps, at last rushed upon him and grasped him: he was obliged to pause and decide whether he would surrender and obey, or whether he would give the refusal that must carry irrevocable consequences. It was in the room above Nello's shop, which Tito had now hired as a lodging, that the elder Cennini handed him the last quota of the sum on behalf of Bernardo Rucellai, the purchaser of the two most valuable gems.

"*Ecco, giovane mio!*" said the respectable printer and goldsmith, "you have now a pretty little fortune; and if you will take my advice, you will let me place your florins in a safe quarter, where they may increase and multiply, instead of slipping through your fingers for banquets and other follies which are rife among our Florentine youth. And it has been too much the fashion of scholars, especially when, like our Pietro Crinito, they think their scholarship needs to be scented and broidered, to squander with one hand till they have been fain to beg with the other.

I have brought you the money, and you are free to make a wise choice or an unwise: I shall see on which side the balance dips. We Florentines hold no man a member of an art till he has shown his skill and been matriculated; and no man is matriculated to the art of life till he has been well tempted. If you make up your mind to put your florins out to usury, you can let me know to-morrow. A scholar may marry, and should have something in readiness for the *morgan-cap*.* *Addio.*"

As Cennini closed the door behind him, Tito turned round with the smile dying out of his face, and fixed his eyes on the table where the florins lay. He made no other movement, but stood with his thumbs in his belt, looking down, in that transfixed state which accompanies the concentration of consciousness on some inward image.

"A man's ransom!"—who was it that had said five hundred florins was more than a man's ransom? If now, under this midday sun, on some hot coast far away, a man somewhat stricken in years—a man not without high thoughts and with the most passionate heart—a man who long years ago had rescued a little boy from a life of beggary, filth, and cruel wrong, had reared him tenderly, and been to him as a father—if that man were now under this summer sun toiling as a slave, hewing wood and drawing water, perhaps being smitten and buffeted because he was not deft and active? If he were saying to himself, "Tito will find me: he had but to carry our manuscripts and gems to Venice; he will have raised money, and will never rest till he finds me out"? If that were certain, could he, Tito, see the price of the gems lying before him, and say, "I will stay at Florence, where I am fanned by soft airs of promised love and prosperity; I will not risk myself for his sake"? No, surely not, *if it were certain*. But nothing could be farther from certainty. The galley had been taken by a Turkish vessel on its way to Delos: *that* was known by the report of the companion galley, which had escaped. But there had been resistance, and probable bloodshed; a man had been seen falling overboard: who were the survivors, and what had befallen them amongst all the multitude of possibilities? Had not he, Tito, suffered shipwreck, and narrowly escaped drowning? He had good cause for feeling the omnipresence of casualties that threatened all projects with futility. The rumor that

* A sum given by the bridegroom to the bride the day after the marriage (*Morgengabe*).

there were pirates who had a settlement in Delos was not to be depended on, or might be nothing to the purpose. What, probably enough, would be the result if he were to quit Florence and go to Venice; get authoritative letters—yes, he knew that might be done—and set out for the Archipelago? Why, that he should be himself seized, and spend all his florins on preliminaries, and be again a destitute wanderer—with no more gems to sell.

Tito had a clearer vision of that result than of the possible moment when he might find his father again, and carry him deliverance. It would surely be an unfairness that he, in his full ripe youth, to whom life had hitherto had some of the stint and subjection of a school, should turn his back on promised love and distinction, and perhaps never be visited by that promise again. “And yet,” he said to himself, “if I were certain that Baldassarre Calvo was alive, and that I could free him, by whatever exertions or perils, I would go now—now I have the money: it was useless to debate the matter before. I would go now to Bardo and Bartolommeo Scala, and tell them the whole truth.” Tito did not say to himself so distinctly that if those two men had known the whole truth he was aware there would have been no alternative for him but to go in search of his benefactor, who, if alive, was the rightful owner of the gems, and whom he had always equivocally spoken of as “lost”; he did not say to himself—what he was not ignorant of—that Greeks of distinction had made sacrifices, taken voyages again and again, and sought help from crowned and mitred heads for the sake of freeing relatives from slavery to the Turks. Public opinion did not regard this as exceptional virtue.

This was his first real colloquy with himself: he had gone on following the impulses of the moment, and one of those impulses had been to conceal half the fact; he had never considered this part of his conduct long enough to face the consciousness of his motives for the concealment. What was the use of telling the whole? It was true, the thought had crossed his mind several times since he had quitted Nauplia that, after all, it was a great relief to be quit of Baldassarre, and he would have liked to know *who* it was that had fallen overboard. But such thoughts spring inevitably out of a relation that is irksome. Baldassarre was exacting, and had got stranger as he got older: he was constantly scrutinizing Tito's mind to see whether it answered to his own exaggerated expectations; and age—

the age of a thick-set, heavy-browed, bald man beyond sixty, whose intensity and eagerness in the grasp of ideas have long taken the character of monotony and repetition, may be looked at from many points of view without being found attractive. Such a man, stranded among new acquaintances unless he had the philosopher's stone, would hardly find rank, youth and beauty at his feet. The feelings that gather fervor from novelty will be of little help toward making the world a home for dimmed and faded human beings; and if there is any love of which they are not widowed, it must be the love that is rooted in memories and distils perpetually the sweet balms of fidelity and forbearing tenderness.

But surely such memories were not absent from Tito's mind? Far in the backward vista of his remembered life, when he was only seven years old, Baldassarre had rescued him from blows, had taken him to a home that seemed like opened paradise, where there was sweet food and soothing caresses, all had on Baldassarre's knee; and from that time till the hour they had parted, Tito had been the one centre of Baldassarre's fatherly cares.

And he had been docile, pliable, quick of apprehension, ready to acquire: a very bright lovely boy, a youth of even splendid grace, who seemed quite without vices, as if that beautiful form represented a vitality so exquisitely poised and balanced that it could know no uneasy desires, no unrest—a radiant presence for a lonely man to have won for himself. If he were silent when his father expected some response, still he did not look moody; if he declined some labor—why, he flung himself down with such a charming, half-smiling, half-pleading air, that the pleasure of looking at him made amends to one who had watched his growth with a sense of claim and possession; the curves of Tito's mouth had ineffable good-humor in them. And then, the quick talent to which everything came readily, from philosophical systems to the rhymes of a street ballad caught up at a hearing! Would any one have said that Tito had not made a rich return to his benefactor, or that his gratitude and affection would fail on any great demand?

He did not admit that his gratitude had failed; but *it was not certain* that Baldassarre was in slavery, not certain that he was living.

"Do I not owe something to myself?" said Tito, inwardly, with a slight movement of his shoulders, the first he had made since he had turned to look down at the

florins. "Before I quit everything, and incur again all the risks of which I am even now weary, I must at least have a reasonable hope. Am I to spend my life in a wandering search? *I believe he is dead.* Cennini was right about my florins: I will place them in his hands to-morrow."

When, the next morning, Tito put this determination into act he had chosen his color in the game, and had given an inevitable bent to his wishes. He had made it impossible that he should not from henceforth desire it to be the truth that his father was dead; impossible that he should not be tempted to baseness rather than that the precise facts of his conduct should not remain forever concealed.

Under every guilty secret there is hidden a brood of guilty wishes, whose unwholesome infecting life is cherished by the darkness. The contaminating effect of deeds often lies less in the commission than in the consequent adjustment of our desires—the enlistment of our self-interest on the side of falsity; as, on the other hand, the purifying influence of public confession springs from the fact, that by it the hope in lies is forever swept away, and the soul recovers the noble attitude of simplicity.

Besides, in this first distinct colloquy with himself the ideas which had previously been scattered and interrupted had now concentrated themselves; the little rills of selfishness had united and made a channel, so that they could never again meet with the same resistance. Hitherto Tito had left in vague indecision the question whether, with the means in his power, he would not return, and ascertain his father's fate; he had now made a definite excuse to himself for not taking that course; he had avowed to himself a choice which he would have been ashamed to avow to others, and which would have made him ashamed in the resurgent presence of his father. But the inward shame the reflex of that outward law which the great heart of mankind makes for every individual man, a reflex which will exist even in the absence of the sympathetic impulses that need no law, but rush to the deed of fidelity and pity as inevitably as the brute mother shields her young from the attack of the hereditary enemy—that inward shame was showing its blushes in Tito's determined assertion to himself that his father was dead, or that at least search was hopeless.

CHAPTER X.

UNDER THE PLANE-TREE.

ON the day of San Giovanni, it was already three weeks ago that Tito had handed his florins to Cennini, and we have seen that as he set out toward the Via de Bardi he showed all the outward signs of a mind at ease. How should it be otherwise? He never jarred with what was immediately around him, and his nature was too joyous, too unapprehensive, for the hidden and the distant to grasp him in the shape of a dread. As he turned out of the hot sunshine into the shelter of a narrow street, took off the black cloth berretta, or simple cap with upturned lappet, which just crowned his brown curls, pushing his hair and tossing his head backward to court the cooler air, there was no brand of duplicity on his brow; neither was there any stamp of candor: it was simply a finely-formed, square, smooth young brow. And the slow absent glance he cast around at the upper windows of the houses had neither more dissimulation in it, nor more ingenuousness, than belongs to a youthful well-opened eyelid with its unwearied breadth of gaze; to perfectly pellucid lenses; to the undimmed dark of a rich brown iris; and to a pure cerulean-tinted angle of whiteness streaked with the delicate shadows of long eyelashes. Was it that Tito's face attracted or repelled according to the mental attitude of the observer? Was it a cipher with more than one key? The strong, unmistakable expression in his whole air and person was a negative one, and it was perfectly veracious; it declared the absence of any uneasy claim, any restless vanity, and it made the admiration that followed him as he passed among the troop of holiday-makers a thoroughly willing tribute.

For by this time the stir of the Festa was felt even in the narrowest side-streets; the throng which had at one time been concentrated in the lines through which the procession had to pass, was now streaming out in all directions in pursuit of a new object. Such intervals of a Festa are precisely the moments when the vaguely active animal spirits of a crowd are likely to be the most petulant and most ready to sacrifice a stray individual to the greater happiness of the greater number. As Tito entered

the neighborhood of San Martino, he found the throng rather denser; and near the hostelry of the *Bertucce*, or Baboons, there was evidently some object which was arresting the passengers and forming them into a knot. It needed nothing of great interest to draw aside passengers unfreighted with a purpose, and Tito was preparing to turn aside into an adjoining, when, amidst the loud laughter, his ear discerned a distressed childish voice crying, "Loose me! Holy Virgin help me!" which at once determined him to push his way into the knot of gazers. He had just had time to perceive that the distressed voice came from a young contadina, whose white hood had fallen off in the struggle to get her hands free from the grasp of a man in the parti-colored dress of a *cerretano*, or conjuror, who was making laughing attempts to soothe and cajole her, evidently carrying with him the amused sympathy of the spectators. These, by a persuasive variety of words signifying simpleton, for which the Florentine dialect is rich in equivalents, seemed to be arguing with the contadina against her obstinacy. At the first moment the girl's face was turned away, and he saw only her light-brown hair plaited and fastened with a long silver pin; but in the next the struggle brought her face opposite Tito's, and he saw the baby features of Tessa, her blue eyes filled with tears, and her under-lip quivering. Tessa, too, saw *him*, and through the mist of her swelling tears there beamed a sudden hope, like that in the face of a little child, when, held by a stranger against its will, it sees a familiar hand stretched out.

In an instant Tito had pushed his way through the barrier of bystanders, whose curiosity made them ready to turn aside at the sudden interference of this handsome young signor, had grasped Tessa's waist, and had said, "Loose this child! What right have you to hold her against her will?"

The conjuror—a man with one of those faces in which the angles of the eyes and eyebrows, of the nostrils, mouth, and sharply defined jaw, all tend upward—showed his small regular teeth in an impish but not ill-natured grin, as he let go Tessa's hands, and stretched out his own backward, shrugging his shoulders, and bending them forward a little in a half-apologetic, half-protesting manner.

"I mean the ragazza no evil in the world, Messere: ask this respectable company. I was only going to show them a few samples of my skill, in which this little damsel

might have helped me the better because of her kitten face, which would have assured them of open dealing; and I had promised her a lapful of confetti as a reward. But what then? Messer has doubtless better confetti at hand, and she knows it."

A general laugh among the bystanders accompanied these last words of the conjuror, raised, probably by the look of relief and confidence with which Tessa clung to Tito's arm, as he drew it from her waist, and placed her hand within it. She only cared about the laugh as she might have cared about the roar of wild beasts from which she was escaping, not attaching any meaning to it; but Tito, who had no sooner got her on his arm than he foresaw some embarrassment in the situation, hastened to get clear of observers who, having been despoiled of an expected amusement, were sure to re-establish the balance by jests.

"See, see, little one! here is your hood," said the conjuror, throwing the bit of white drapery over Tessa's head. "*Orsù*, bear me no malice; come back to me when Messere can spare you."

"Ah! Maestro Vaiano, she'll come back presently, as the toad said to the harrow," called out one of the spectators, seeing how Tessa started and shrank at the action of the conjuror.

Tito pushed his way vigorously toward the corner of a side street, a little vexed at this delay in his progress to the Via de Bardi, and intending to get rid of the poor little contadina as soon as possible. The next street, too, had its passengers inclined to make holiday remarks on so unusual a pair; but they had no sooner entered it than he said, in a kind but hurried manner, "Now, little one, where were you going? Are you come by yourself to the Festa?"

"Ah, no!" said Tessa, looking frightened and distressed again; "I have lost my mother in the crowd—her and my father-in-law. They will be angry—he will beat me. It was in the crowd in San Pulinari—somebody pushed me along and I couldn't stop myself, so I got away from them. Oh, I don't know where they're gone! Please, don't leave me!"

Her eyes had been swelling with tears again, and she ended with a sob.

Tito hurried along again: the Church of the Badia was not far off. They could enter it by the cloister that opened at the back, and in the church he could talk to

Tessa—perhaps leave her. No! it was an hour at which the church was not open; but they paused under the shelter of the cloister, and he said, “Have you no cousin or friend in Florence, my little Tessa, whose house you could find; or are you afraid of walking by yourself since you have been frightened by the conjuror? I am in a hurry to get to Oltrarno, but if I could take you anywhere near —,”

“Oh, I *am* frightened: he was the devil—I know he was. And I don’t know where to go. I have nobody: and my mother meant to have her dinner somewhere, and I don’t know where. Holy Madonna! I shall be beaten.”

The corners of the pouting mouth went down piteously, and the poor little bosom with the beads on it above the green serge gown heaved so, that there was no longer any help for it: a loud sob *would* come, and the big tears fell as if they were making up for lost time. Here was a situation! It would have been brutal to leave her, and Tito’s nature was all gentleness. He wished at that moment that he had not been expected in the Via de Bardi. As he saw her lifting up her holiday apron to catch the hurrying tears, he laid his hand, too, on the apron, and rubbed one of the cheeks and kissed the baby-like roundness.

“My poor little Tessa! leave off crying. Let us see what can be done. Where is your home?—where do you live?”

There was no answer, but the sobs began to subside a little and the drops to fall less quickly.

“Come! I’ll take you a little way, if you’ll tell me where you want to go.”

The apron fell, and Tessa’s face began to look as contented as a cherub’s budding from a cloud. The diabolical conjuror, the anger and the beating, seemed a long way off.

“I think I’ll go home, if you’ll take me,” she said, in a half whisper, looking up at Tito with wide blue eyes, and with something sweeter than a smile—with a childlike calm.

“Come, then, little one,” said Tito, in a caressing tone, putting her arm within his again. “Which way is it?”

“Beyond Peretola—where the large pear-tree is.”

“Peretola? Out at which gate, pazzarella? I am a stranger, you must remember.”

“Out at the Por del Prato,” said Tessa, moving along with a very fast hold on Tito’s arm.

He did not know all the turnings well enough to venture on an attempt at choosing the quietest streets; and besides, it occurred to him that where the passengers were most numerous there was, perhaps, the most chance of meeting with Monna Ghita and finding an end to his knight-errantship. So he made straight for Porta Rossa, and on to Ognissanti, showing his usual bright propitiatory face to the mixed observers who threw their jests at him and his little heavy-shod maiden with much liberality. Mingled with the more decent holiday-makers there were frolicsome apprentices, rather envious of his good fortune; bold-eyed women with the badge of the yellow veil; beggars who thrust forward their caps for alms, in derision at Tito's evident haste; dicers, sharpers, and loungers of the worst sort; boys whose tongues were used to wag in concert at the most brutal street games; for the streets of Florence were not always a moral spectacle in those times, and Tessa's terror at being lost in the crowd was not wholly unreasonable.

When they reached the Piazza d'Ognissanti Tito slackened his pace: they were both heated with their hurried walk, and here was a wider space where they could take breath. They sat down on one of the stone benches which were frequent against the walls of old Florentine houses.

"Holy Virgin!" said Tessa; "I am glad we have got away from those women and boys; but I was not frightened, because you could take care of me."

"Pretty little Tessa!" said Tito, smiling at her. "What makes you feel so safe with me?"

"Because you are so beautiful—like the people going into Paradise; they are all good."

"It is a long while since you had your breakfast, Tessa," said Tito, seeing some stalls near, with fruit and sweetmeats upon them. "Are you hungry?"

"Yes, I think I am—if you will have some too."

Tito bought some apricots, and cakes, and comfits, and put them into her apron.

"Come," he said, "let us walk on to the Prato, and then, perhaps, you will not be afraid to go the rest of the way alone."

"But you will have some of the apricots and things," said Tessa, rising obediently and gathering up her apron as a bag for her store.

"We will see," said Tito aloud; and to himself he said, "Here is a little contadina who might inspire a better idyl

than Lorenzo de Medici's 'Nencia da Barbarino,' that Nello's friends rave about; if I were only a Theocritus, or had time to cultivate the necessary experience by unseasonable walks of this sort! However, the mischief is done now: I am so late already that another half hour will make no difference. Pretty little pigeon!"

"We have a garden and plenty of pears," said Tessa, "and two cows, besides the mules; and I'm very fond of them. But my father-in-law is a cross man: I wish my mother had not married him. I think he is wicked; he is very ugly."

"And does your mother let him beat you, poverina? You said you were afraid of being beaten."

"Ah, my mother herself scolds me: she loves my young sister better, and thinks I don't do work enough. Nobody speaks kindly to me, only the Pievano (parish priest) when I go to confession. And the men in the Mercato laugh at me and make fun of me. Nobody ever kissed me and spoke to me as you do; just as I talk to my little black-faced kid, because I'm very fond of it."

It seemed not to have entered Tessa's mind that there was any change in Tito's appearance since the morning he begged the milk from her, and that he looked now like a personage for whom she must summon her little stock of reverent words and signs. He had impressed her too differently from any human being who had ever come near her before, for her to make any comparison of details; she took no note of his dress; he was simply a voice and a face to her, something come from Paradise into a world where most things seemed hard and angry; and she prattled with as little restraint as if he had been an imaginary companion born of her own lovingness and the sunshine.

They had now reached the Prato, which at that time was a large open space within the walls, where the Florentine youth played at their favorite *Calcio*—a peculiar kind of football—and otherwise exercised themselves. At this midday time it was forsaken and quiet to the very gates, where a tent had been erected in preparation for the race. On the border of this wide meadow, Tito paused and said—

"Now, Tessa, you will not be frightened if I leave you to walk the rest of the way by yourself. Addio! Shall I come and buy a cup of milk from you in the Mercato to-morrow morning, to see that you are quite safe?"

He added this question in a soothing tone, as he saw her

eyes widening sorrowfully, and the corners of her mouth falling. She said nothing at first; she only opened her apron and looked down at her apricots and sweetmeats. Then she looked up at him again and said complainingly—

“I thought you would have some, and we could sit down under a tree outside the gate, and eat them together.”

“Tessa, Tessa, you little siren, you would ruin me,” said Tito, laughing, and kissing both her cheeks. “I ought to have been in the Via de Bardi long ago. No! I must go back now; you are in no danger. There—I’ll take an apricot. Addio!”

He had already stepped two yards from her when he said the last word. Tessa could not have spoken; she was pale, and a great sob was rising; but she turned round as if she felt there was no hope for her, and stepped on, holding her apron so forgetfully that the apricots began to roll out on the grass.

Tito could not help looking after her, and seeing her shoulders rise to the bursting sob, and the apricots fall—could not help going after her and picking them up. It was very hard upon him: he was a long way off the Via de Bardi, and very near to Tessa.

“See, my silly one,” he said, picking up the apricots. “Come, leave off crying, I will go with you, and we’ll sit down under the tree. Come, I don’t like to see you cry; but you know I must go back some time.”

So it came to pass that they found a great plane-tree not far outside the gates, and they sat down under it, and all the feast was spread out on Tessa’s lap, she leaning with her back against the trunk of the tree, and he stretched opposite to her, resting his elbows on the rough green growth cherished by the shade, while the sunlight stole through the boughs and played about them like a winged thing. Tessa’s face was all contentment again, and the taste of the apricots and sweetmeats seemed very good.

“You pretty bird!” said Tito, looking at her as she sat eyeing the remains of the feast with an evident mental debate about saving them, since he had said he would not have any more. “To think of any one scolding you! What sins do you tell of at confession, Tessa?”

“Oh, a great many. I am often naughty. I don’t like work, and I can’t help being idle, though I know I shall be beaten and scolded; and I give the mules the best fodder when nobody sees me, and then when the Madre is

angry I say I didn't do it, and that makes me frightened at the devil. I think the conjuror was the devil. I am not so frightened after I've been to confession. And see, I've got a *Breve* here that a good father, who came to Prato preaching this Easter, blessed and gave us all." Here Tessa drew from her bosom a tiny bag carefully fastened up. "And I think the holy Madonna will take care of me; she looks as if she would; and perhaps if I wasn't idle, she wouldn't let me be beaten."

"If they are so cruel to you, Tessa, shouldn't you like to leave them, and go and live with a beautiful lady who would be kind to you, if she would have you to wait upon her?"

Tessa seemed to hold her breath for a moment or two. Then she said doubtfully, "I don't know."

"Then should you like to be *my* little servant, and live with me?" said Tito, smiling. He meant no more than to see what sort of pretty look and answer she would give.

There was a flush of joy immediately. "Will you take me with you now? Ah! I shouldn't go home and be beaten then." She paused a little while, and then added more doubtfully, "But I should like to fetch my black-faced kid."

"Yes, you must go back to your kid, my Tessa," said Tito, rising, "and I must go the other way."

"By Jupiter!" he added, as he went from under the shade of the tree, "it is not a pleasant time of day to walk from here to the Via de Bardi; I am more inclined to lie down and sleep in this shade."

It ended so. Tito had an unconquerable aversion to anything unpleasant, even when an object very much loved and desired was on the other side of it. He had risen early; had waited; had seen sights, and had been already walking in the sun: he was inclined for a siesta, and inclined all the more because little Tessa was there, and seemed to make the air softer. He lay down on the grass again, putting his cap under his head on a green tuft by the side of Tessa. That was not quite comfortable; so he moved again, and asked Tessa to let him rest his head against her lap; and in that way he soon fell asleep. Tessa sat quiet as a dove on its nest, just venturing, when he was fast asleep, to touch the wonderful dark curls that fell backward from his ear. She was too happy to go to sleep—too happy to think that Tito would wake up, and that then he would leave her, and she must go home. It takes

very little water to make a perfect pool for a tiny fish, where it will find its world and paradise all in one, and never have a presentiment of the dry bank. The fretted summer shade and stillness, and the gentle breathing of some loved life near—it would be a paradise to us all, if eager thought, the strong angel with the implacable brow, had not long since closed the gates.

It really was a long while before the waking came—before the long dark eyes opened at Tessa, first with a little surprise, and then with a smile, which was soon quenched by some preoccupying thought. Tito's deeper sleep had broken into a doze, in which he felt himself in the Via de Bardi, explaining his failure to appear at the appointed time. The clear images of that doze urged him to start up at once to a sitting posture, and as he stretched his arms and shook his cap, he said—

"Tessa, little one, you have let me sleep too long. My hunger and the shadows together tell me that the sun has done much travel since I fell asleep. I must lose no more time. Addio," he ended; patting her cheek with one hand and settling his cap with the other.

She said nothing, but there were signs in her face which made him speak again in as serious and as chiding a tone as he could command—

"Now, Tessa, you must not cry. I shall be angry; I shall not love you if you cry. You must go home to your black-faced kid, or if you like you may go back to the gate and see the horses start. But I can stay with you no longer, and if you cry I shall think you are troublesome to me."

The rising tears were checked by terror at this change in Tito's voice. Tessa turned very pale, and sat in trembling silence, with her blue eyes widened by arrested tears.

"Look now," Tito went on soothingly, opening the wallet that hung at his belt, "here is a pretty charm that I have had a long while—ever since I was in Sicily, a country a long way off."

His wallet had many little matters in it mingled with small coins, and he had the usual difficulty in laying his finger on the right thing. He unhooked his wallet, and turned out the contents on Tessa's lap. Among them was his onyx ring.

"Ah, my ring!" he exclaimed, slipping it on the forefinger of his right hand. "I forgot to put it on again this morning. Strange, I never missed it! See, Tessa," he

added, as he spread out the smaller articles, and selected the one he was in search of. "See this pretty little pointed bit of red coral—like your goat's horn, is it not?—and here is a hole in it, so you can put it on the cord round your neck along with your *Breve*, and then the evil spirits can't hurt you: if you ever see them coming in the shadow round the corner, point this little coral horn at them, and they will run away. It is a 'buona fortuna,' and will keep you from harm when I am not with you. Come, undo the cord."

Tessa obeyed, with a tranquilising sense that life was going to be something quite new, and that Tito would be with her often. All who remember their childhood remember the strange, vague sense, when some new experience came, that everything else was going to be changed, and that there would be no lapse into the old monotony. So the bit of coral was hung beside the tiny bag with the scrap of scrawled parchment in it, and Tessa felt braver.

"And now you will give me a kiss," said Tito, economising time by speaking, while he swept in the contents of the wallet and hung it at his waist again, "and look happy, like a good girl, and then——"

But Tessa had obediently put forward her lips in a moment, and kissed his cheek as he hung down his head.

"Oh, you pretty pigeon!" cried Tito, laughing, pressing her round cheeks with his hands and crushing her features together so as to give them a general impartial kiss.

Then he started up and walked away, not looking round till he was ten yards from her, when he just turned and gave a parting beck. Tessa was looking after him, but he could see that she was making no signs of distress. It was enough for Tito if she did not cry while he was present. The softness of his nature required that all sorrow should be hidden away from him.

"I wonder when Romola will kiss my cheek in that way?" thought Tito, as he walked along. It seemed a tiresome distance now, and he almost wished he had not been so soft-hearted, or so tempted to linger in the shade. No other excuse was needed to Bardo and Romola than saying simply that he had been unexpectedly hindered; he felt confident their proud delicacy would inquire no farther. He lost no time in getting to Ognissanti, and hastily taking some food there, he crossed the Arno by the Ponte alla Carraja, and made his way as directly as possible toward the Via de Bardi.

But it was the hour when all the world who meant to be in particularly good time to see the Corso were returning from the Borghi, or villages just outside the gates, where they had dined and reposed themselves; and the thoroughfares leading to the bridges were of course the issues toward which the stream of sightseers tended. Just as Tito reached the Ponte Vecchio and the entrance of the Via de Bardi, he was suddenly urged back toward the angle of the intersecting streets. A company on horseback, coming from the Via Guicciardini, and turning up the Via de Bardi, had compelled the foot-passengers to recede hurriedly. Tito had been walking, as his manner was, with the thumb of his right hand resting in his belt; and as he was thus forced to pause, and was looking carelessly at the passing cavaliers, he felt a very thin, cold hand laid on his. He started round, and saw the Dominican friar whose upturned face had so struck him in the morning. Seen closer, the face looked more evidently worn by sickness and not by age; and again it brought some strong but indefinite reminiscences to Tito.

"Pardon me, but—from your face and your ring,"—said the friar, in a faint voice, "is not your name Tito Melema?"

"Yes," said Tito, also speaking faintly, doubly jarred by the cold touch and the mystery. He was not apprehensive or timid through his imagination, but through his sensations and perceptions he could easily be made to shrink and turn pale like a maiden.

"Then I shall fulfill my commission."

The friar put his hand under his scapulary, and drawing out a small linen bag which hung round his neck, took from it a bit of parchment, doubled and stuck firmly together with some black adhesive substance, and placed it in Tito's hand. On the outside was written in Italian, in a small but distinct character—

"Tito Melema, aged twenty-three, with a dark, beautiful face, long dark curls, the brightest smile, and a large onyx ring on his right forefinger."

Tito did not look at the friar, but tremblingly broke open the bit of parchment. Inside, the words were—

"I am sold for a slave: I think they are going to take me to Antioch. The gems alone will serve to ransom me."

Tito looked round at the friar, but could only ask a question with his eyes.

"I had it at Corinth," the friar said, speaking with

difficulty, like one whose small strength had been overtaxed—"I had it from a man who was dying."

"He is dead, then?" said Tito, with a bounding of the heart.

"Not the writer. The man who gave it to me was a pilgrim, like myself, to whom the writer had intrusted it, because he was journeying to Italy."

"You know the contents?"

"I do not know them, but I conjecture them. Your friend is in slavery: you will go and release him. But I am unable to talk now." The friar, whose voice had become feebler and feebler, sank down on the stone bench against the wall from which he had risen to touch Tito's hand, adding—

"I am at San Marco; my name is Fra Luca."

CHAPTER XI.

TITO'S DILEMMA.

WHEN Fra Luca had ceased to speak, Tito still stood by him in irresolution, and it was not till, the pressure of the passengers being removed, the friar rose and walked slowly into the church of Santa Felicità, that Tito also went on his way along the Via de Bardi.

"If this monk is a Florentine," said he to himself; "if he is going to remain at Florence, everything must be disclosed." He felt that a new crisis had come, but he was not, for all that, too evidently agitated to pay his visit to Bardo, and apologize for his previous non-appearance. Tito's talent for concealment was being fast developed into something less neutral. It was still possible—perhaps it might be inevitable—for him to accept frankly the altered conditions, and avow Baldassarre's existence; but hardly without casting an unpleasant light backward on his original reticence as studied equivocation in order to avoid the fulfillment of a secretly recognized claim, to say nothing of his quiet settlement of himself and investment of his florins, when, it would be clear, his benefactor's fate had not been certified. It was at least provisionally wise to act as if nothing had happened, and for the present he would suspend decisive thought; there was all the night for med-

itation, and no one would know the precise moment at which he had received the letter.

So he entered the room on the second story—where Romola and her father sat among the parchment and marble, aloof from the life of the streets on holidays as well as on common days—with a face only a little less bright than usual, from regret at appearing so late: a regret which wanted no testimony, since he had given up the sight of the Corso in order to express it; and then set himself to throw extra animation into the evening, though all the while his consciousness was at work like a machine with complex action, leaving deposits quite distinct from the line of talk; and by the time he descended the stone stairs and issued from the grim door in the starlight, his mind had really reached a new stage in its formation of a purpose.

And when, the next day, after he was free from his professional work, he turned up the Via del Cocomero toward the convent of San Marco, his purpose was fully shaped. He was going to ascertain from Fra Luca precisely how much he conjectured of the truth, and on what grounds he conjectured it; and, further, how long he was to remain at San Marco. And on that fuller knowledge he hoped to mould a statement which would in any case save him from the necessity of quitting Florence. Tito had never had occasion to fabricate an ingenious lie before: the occasion was come now—the occasion which circumstance never fails to beget on tacit falsity; and his ingenuity was ready. For he had convinced himself that he was not bound to go in search of Baldassarre. He had once said that on a fair assurance of his father's existence and whereabouts, he would unhesitatingly go after him. But, after all, *why* was he bound to go? What, looked at closely, was the end of all life, but to extract the utmost sum of pleasure? And was not his own blooming life a promise of incomparably more pleasure, not for himself only, but for others, than the withered wintry life of a man who was past the time of keen enjoyment, and whose ideas had stiffened into barren rigidity? Those ideas had all been sown in the fresh soil of Tito's mind, and were lively germs there: that was the proper order of things—the order of nature, which treats all maturity as a mere nidus for youth. Baldassarre had done his work, had had his draught of life: Tito said it was *his* turn now.

And the prospect was so vague;—"I think they are

going to take me to Antioch:" here was a vista! After a long voyage, to spend months, perhaps years, in a search for which even now there was no guarantee that it would not prove vain: and to leave behind at starting a life of distinction and love: and to find, if he found anything, the old exacting companionship which was known by rote beforehand. Certainly the gems and therefore the florins were, in a sense, Baldassarre's: in the narrow sense by which the right of possession is determined in ordinary affairs; but in that large and more radically natural view by which the world belongs to youth and strength, they were rather his who could extract the most pleasure out of them. That, he was conscious, was not the sentiment which the complicated play of human feelings had engendered in society. The men around him would expect that he should immediately apply those florins to his benefactor's rescue. But what was the sentiment of society?—a mere tangle of anomalous traditions and opinions, which no wise man would take as a guide, except so far as his own comfort was concerned. Not that he cared for the florins save perhaps for Romola's sake: he would give up the florins readily enough. It was the joy that was due to him and was close to his lips, which he felt he was not bound to thrust away from him and so travel on, thirsting. Any maxims that required a man to fling away the good that was needed to make existence sweet, were only the lining of human selfishness turned outward: they were made by men who wanted others to sacrifice themselves for their sake. He would rather that Baldassarre should not suffer: he liked no one to suffer; but could any philosophy prove to him that he was bound to care for another's suffering more than for his own? To do so he must have loved Baldassarre devotedly, and he did *not* love him: was that his own fault? Gratitude! seen closely, it made no valid claim: his father's life would have been dreary without him: are we convicted of a debt to men for the pleasures they give themselves?

Having once begun to explain away Baldassarre's claim, Tito's thought showed itself as active as a virulent acid, eating its rapid way through all the tissues of sentiment. His mind was destitute of that dread which has been erroneously decried as if it were nothing higher than a man's animal care for his own skin: that awe of the Divine Nemesis which was felt by religious pagans, and, though it took a more positive form under Christianity, is still felt by the

mass of mankind simply as a vague fear at anything which is called wrong doing. Such terror of the unseen is so far above mere sensual cowardice that it will annihilate that cowardice: it is the initial recognition of a moral law restraining desire, and checks the hard bold scrutiny of imperfect thought into obligations which can never be proved to have any sanctity in the absence of feeling. "It is good," sing the old Eumenides, in Æschylus, "that fear should sit as the guardian of the soul, forcing it into wisdom—good that men should carry a threatening shadow in their hearts under the full sunshine; else, how should they learn to revere the right?" That guardianship may become needless; but only when all outward law has become needless—only when duty and love have united in one stream and made a common force.

As Tito entered the outer cloister of San Marco, and inquired for Fra Luca, there was no shadowy presentiment in his mind: he felt himself too cultured and sceptical for that: he had been nurtured in contempt for the tales of priests whose impudent lives were a proverb, and in erudite familiarity with disputes concerning the Chief Good, which had after all, he considered, left it a matter of taste. Yet fear was a strong element in Tito's nature—the fear of what he believed or saw was likely to rob him of pleasure: and he had a definite fear that Fra Luca might be the means of driving him from Florence.

"Fra Luca? ah, he is gone to Fiesole—to the Dominican monastery there. He was taken on a litter in the cool of the morning. The poor brother is very ill. Could you leave a message for him?"

This answer was given by a *fra converso*, or lay brother, whose accent told plainly that he was a raw contadino, and whose dull glance implied no curiosity.

"Thanks; my business can wait."

Tito turned away with a sense of relief. "This friar is not likely to live," he said to himself. "I saw he was worn to a shadow. And at Fiesole there will be nothing to recall me to his mind. Besides, if he should come back, my explanation will serve as well then as now. But I wish I knew what it was that his face recalled to me."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRIZE IS NEARLY GRASPED.

TITO walked along with a light step, for the immediate fear had vanished; the usual joyousness of his disposition reassumed its predominance, and he was going to see Romola. Yet Romola's life seemed an image of that loving, pitying devotedness, that patient endurance of irksome tasks, from which he had shrunk and excused himself. But he was not out of love with goodness, or prepared to plunge into vice: he was in his fresh youth, with soft pulses for all charm and loveliness; he had still a healthy appetite for ordinary human joys, and the poison could only work by degrees. He had sold himself to evil, but at present life seemed so nearly the same to him that he was not conscious of the bond. He meant all things to go on as they had done before, both within and without him: he meant to win golden opinions by meritorious exertion, by ingenious learning, by amiable compliance: he was not going to do anything that would throw him out of harmony with the beings he cared for. And he cared supremely for Romola; he wished to have her for his beautiful and loving wife. There might be a wealthier alliance within the ultimate reach of successful accomplishments like his, but there was no woman in all Florence like Romola. When she was near him, and looked at him with her sincere hazel eyes, he was subdued by a delicious influence as strong and inevitable as those musical vibrations which take possession of us with a rhythmic empire that no sooner ceases than we desire it to begin again.

As he trod the stone stairs, when he was still outside the door, with no one but Maso near him, the influence seemed to have begun its work by the mere nearness of anticipation.

"Welcome, Tito mio," said the old man's voice, before Tito had spoken. There was a new vigor in the voice, a new cheerfulness in the blind face, since that first interview more than two months ago. "You have brought fresh manuscript, doubtless; but since we were talking last night I have had new ideas: we must take a wider scope—we must go back upon our footsteps."

Tito, paying his homage to Romola as he advanced,

went, as his custom was, straight to Bardo's chair, and put his hand in the palm that was held to receive it, placing himself on the cross-legged leather seat with scrolled ends, close to Bardo's elbow.

"Yes," he said, in his gentle way; "I have brought the new manuscript, but that can wait your pleasure. I have young limbs, you know, and can walk back up the hill without any difficulty."

He did not look at Romola as he said this, but he knew quite well that her eyes were fixed on him with delight.

"That is well said, my son." Bardo had already addressed Tito in this way once or twice of late. "And I perceive with gladness that you do not shrink from labor, without which, the poet has wisely said, life has given nothing to mortals. It is too often the 'palma sine pulvere,' the prize of glory without the dust of the race, that attracts young ambition. But what says the Greek? 'In the morning of life, work; in the mid-day, give counsel; in the evening, pray.' It is true, I might be thought to have reached that helpless evening; but not so, while I have counsel within me which is yet unspoken. For my mind, as I have often said, was shut up as by a dam; the plenteous waters lay dark and motionless; but you, my Tito, have opened a duct for them, and they rush forward with a force that surprises myself. And now, what I want is, that we should go over our preliminary ground again, with a wider scheme of comment and illustration: otherwise I may lose opportunities which I now see retrospectively, and which may never occur again. You mark what I am saying, Tito?"

He had just stooped to reach his manuscript, which had rolled down, and Bardo's jealous ear was alive to the slight movement.

Tito might have been excused for shrugging his shoulders at the prospect before him, but he was not naturally impatient; moreover, he had been bred up in that laborious erudition, at once minute and copious, which was the chief intellectual task of the age; and with Romola near, he was floated along by waves of agreeable sensation that made everything seem easy.

"Assuredly," he said, "you wish to enlarge your comments on certain passages we have cited.

"Not only so; I wish to introduce an occasional *excursus*, where we have noticed an author to whom I have given special study; for I may die too soon to achieve any sepa-

rate work. And this is not a time for scholarly integrity and well-sifted learning to lie idle, when it is not only rash ignorance that we have to fear, but when there are men like Calderino, who, as Poliziano has well shown, have recourse to imprudent falsities of citation to serve the ends of their vanity and secure a triumph to their own mistakes. Wherefore, my Tito, I think it not well that we should let slip the occasion that lies under our hands. And now we will turn back to the point where we have cited the passage from Thucydides, and I wish you, by way of preliminary, to go with me through all my notes on the Latin translation made by Lorenzo Valla, for which the incomparable Pope Nicholas V.—with whose personal notice I was honored while I was yet young, and when he was still Thomas of Sarzana—paid him (I say not unduly) the sum of five hundred gold scudi. But inasmuch as Valla, though otherwise of dubious fame, is held in high honor for his severe scholarship, whence the epigrammatist has jocosely said of him that since he went among the shades, Pluto himself has not dared to speak in the ancient languages, it is the more needful that his name should not be as a stamp warranting false wares; and therefore I would introduce an *excursus* on Thucydides, wherein my castigations of Valla's text may find a fitting place. My Romola, thou wilt reach the needful volumes—thou knowest them—on the fifth shelf of the cabinet."

Tito rose at the same moment with Romola, saying, "I will reach them, if you will point them out out," and followed her hastily into the adjoining small room, where the walls were also covered with ranges of books in perfect order.

"There they are," said Romola, pointing upward; "every book is just where it was when my father ceased to see them."

Tito stood by her without hastening to reach the books. They had never been in this room together before.

"I hope," she continued, turning her eyes full on Tito, with a look of grave confidence—"I hope he will not weary you; this work makes him so happy."

"And me too, Romola—if you will only let me say, I love you—if you will only think me worth loving a little."

His speech was the softest murmur, and the dark beautiful face, nearer to hers than than it had ever been before, was looking at her with beseeching tenderness.

"I do love you," murmured Romola; she looked at him with the same simple majesty as ever, but her voice had never in her life before sunk to that murmur. It seemed to them both that they were looking at each other a long while before her lips moved again; yet it was but a moment till she said, "I know *now* what it is to be happy."

The faces just met, and the dark curls mingled for an instant with the rippling gold. Quick as lightning after that Tito set his foot on a projecting ledge of the bookshelves, and reached down the needful volumes. They were both contented to be silent and separate, for that first blissful experience of mutual consciousness was all the more exquisite for being unperturbed by immediate sensation.

It had all been as rapid as the irreversible mingling of waters, for even the eager and jealous Bardo had not become impatient.

"You have the volumes, my Romola?" the old man said, as they came near him again. "And now you will get your pen ready; for, as Tito marks off the scholia we determine on extracting, it will be well for you to copy them without delay—numbering them carefully, mind, to correspond with the numbers in the text which he will write."

Romola always had some task which gave her a share in this joint work. Tito took his stand at the leggio, where he both wrote and read, and she placed herself at a table just in front of him, where she was ready to give into her father's hands anything that he might happen to want, or relieve him of a volume that he had done with. They had always been in that position since the work began, yet on this day it seemed new; it was so different now for them to be opposite each other; so different for Tito to take a book from her, as she lifted it from her father's knee. Yet there was no finesse to secure an additional look or touch. Each woman creates in her own likeness the love-tokens that are offered to her; and Romola's deep calm happiness encompassed Tito like the rich but quiet evening light which dissipates all unrest.

They had been two hours at their work, and were just desisting because of the fading light, when the door opened and there entered a figure strangely incongruous with the current of their thoughts and with the suggestions of every object around them. It was the figure of a short stout black-eyed woman, about fifty, wearing a black

velvet berretta, or close cap, embroidered with pearls, under which surprisingly massive black braids surmounted the little bulging forehead, and fell in rich plaited curves over the ears, while an equally surprising carmine tint on the upper region of the fat cheeks contrasted with the surrounding sallowness. Three rows of pearls and a lower necklace of gold reposed on the horizontal cushion of her neck; the embroidered border of her trailing black-velvet gown and her embroidered long-drooping sleeves of rose-colored damask, were slightly faded, but they conveyed to the initiated eye the satisfactory assurance that they were the splendid result of six months' labor by a skilled workman: and the rose-colored petticoat, with its dimmed white fringe and seed-pearl arabesques, was duly exhibited in order to suggest a similar pleasing reflection. A handsome coral rosary hung from one side of an inferential belt, which emerged into certainty with a large clasp of silver wrought in niello; and, on the other side, where the belt again became inferential, hung a scarsella, or large purse, of crimson velvet, stitched with pearls. Her little fat right hand, which looked as if it had been made of paste, and had risen out of shape under partial baking, held a small book of devotions, also splendid with velvet, pearls, and silver.

The figure was already too familiar to Tito to be startling, for Monna Brigida was a frequent visitor at Bardo's, being excepted from the sentence of banishment passed on feminine triviality, on the ground of her cousinship to his dead wife and her early care for Romola, who now looked round at her with an affectionate smile, and rose to draw the leather seat to a due distance from her father's chair, that the coming gush of talk might not be too near his ear.

"*La cugina?*" said Bardo, interrogatively, detecting the short steps and the sweeping drapery.

"Yes, it is your cousin," said Monna Brigida, in an alert voice, raising her fingers smilingly at Tito, and then lifting up her face to be kissed by Romola. "Always the troublesome cousin breaking in on your wisdom," she went on, seating herself and beginning to fan herself with the white veil hanging over her arm. "Well, well; if I didn't bring you some news of the world now and then, I do believe you'd forget there was anything in life but these mouldy ancients, who want sprinkling with holy water, if all I hear about them is true. Not but what the world is bad

enough nowadays, for the scandals that turn up under one's nose at every corner—I don't want to hear and see such things, but one can't go about with one's head in a bag; and it was only yesterday—well, well, you needn't burst out at me, Bardo, I'm not going to tell anything; if I'm not as wise as the three kings, I know how many legs go into one boot. But, nevertheless, Florence is a wicked city—is it not true, Messer Tito? for you go into the world. Not but what one must sin a little—Messer Domeneddio expects that of us, else what are the blessed sacraments for? And what I say is, we've got to reverence the saints, and not to set ourselves up as if we could be like them, else life would be unbearable; as it will be if things go on after this new fashion. For what do you think? I've been at the wedding to-day—Dianora Acciajoli's with the young Albizzi that there has been so much talk of—and everybody wondered at its being to-day instead of yesterday; but, *cieli!* such a wedding as it was might have been put off till the next Quaresima for a penance. For there was the bride looking like a white nun—not so much as a pearl about her—and the bridegroom as solemn as San Giuseppe. It's true! And half the people invited were *Piagnoni*—they call them *Piagnoni** now, these new saints of Fra Girolamo's making. And to think of two families like the Albizzi and the Acciajoli taking up such notions, when they could afford to wear the best! Well, well, they invited me—but they could do no other, seeing my husband was Luca Antonio's uncle by the mother's side—and a pretty time I had of it while we waited under the canopy in front of the house, before they let us in. I couldn't stand in my clothes, it seemed, without giving offense; for there was Monna Berta, who has had worse secrets in her time than any I could tell of myself, looking askance at me from under her hood like a *pinzochera* † and telling me to read the Frate's book about widows, from which she had found great guidance. Holy Madonna! it seems as if widows had nothing to do now but to buy their coffins, and think it a thousand years until they get into them, instead of enjoying themselves a little when they've got their hands free for the first time. And what do you think was the music we had, to make our dinner lively? A long discourse from Fra Domenico of San Marco, about the doctrines of their blessed Fra Girolamo—the three doctrines we are all to get by heart; and he kept marking

* Funeral mourners: properly, paid mourners.

them off on his fingers till he made my flesh creep: and the first is, Florence, or the Church—I don't know which, for first he said one and then the other—shall be scourged; but if he means the pestilence, the Signory ought to put a stop to such preaching, for it's enough to raise the swelling under one's arms with fright: but then, after that, he says Florence is to be regenerated; but what will be the good of that when we're all dead of the plague, or something else? And then, the third thing, and what he said oftenest, is, that it's all to be in our days: and he marked that off on his thumb, till he made me tremble like the very jelly before me. They had jellies, to be sure, with the arms of the Albizzi and the Acciajoli raised on them in all colors; they've not turned the world quite upside down yet. But all their talk is, that we are to go back to the old ways: for up starts Francesco Valori, that I've danced with in the Via Laiga when he was a bachelor and as fond of the Medici as anybody, and he makes a speech about the old times, before the Florentines had left off crying 'Popolo' and begun to cry 'Palle'—as if that had anything to do with a wedding!—and how we ought to keep to the rules the Signory laid down heaven knows when, that we were not to wear this and that, and not to eat this and that—and how our manners were corrupted, and we read bad books; though he can't say that of *me*——”

“Stop, cousin!” said Bardo, in his imperious tone, for he had a remark to make, and only desperate measures could arrest the rattling lengthiness of Monna Brigida's discourse. But now she gave a little start, pursed up her mouth, and looked at him with round eyes.

“Francesco Valori is not altogether wrong,” Bardo went on. “Bernardo, indeed, rates him not highly, and is rather of opinion that he christians private grudges by the name of public zeal; though I must admit that my good Bernardo is too slow of belief in that unalloyed patriotism which was found in all its lustre amongst the ancients. But it is true, Tito, that our manners have degenerated somewhat from that noble frugality which, as has been well seen in the public acts of our citizens, as the parent of true magnificence. For men, as I hear, will now spend on the transient show of a Giostra, sums which would suffice to found a library, and confer a lasting possession on mankind. Still, I conceive, it remains true of us Florentines that we have more of that magnanimous sobriety which

† A Sister of the Third Order of St. Francis: an uncloistered nun.

abhors a trivial lavishness that it may be grandly open-handed on grand occasions, than can be found in any other city of Italy; for I understand that the Neapolitan and Milanese courtiers laugh at the scarcity of our plate, and think scorn of our great families for borrowing from each other that furniture of the table at their entertainments. But in the vain laughter of folly wisdom hears half its applause."

"Laughter, indeed!" burst forth Monna Brigida again, the moment Bardo paused. "If anybody wanted to hear laughter at the wedding to-day they were disappointed, for when young Niccolò Macchiavelli tried to make a joke, and told stories out of Franco Sacchetti's book, how it was no use for the Signoria to make rules for us women, because we were cleverer than all the painters, and architects, and doctors of logic in the world, for we could make black look white, and yellow look pink, and crooked look straight, and, if anything was forbidden, we could find a new name for it—Holy Virgin! the Pagnoni looked more dismal than before, and somebody said Sacchetti's book was wicked. Well, I don't read it—they can't accuse *me* of reading anything. Save me from going to a wedding again, if that's to be the fashion; for all of us who were not Piagnoni were as comfortable as wet chickens. I was never caught in a worse trap but once before, and that was when I went to hear their precious Frate last Quaresima in San Lorenzo. Perhaps I never told you about it, Messer Tito?—it almost freezes my blood when I think of it. How he rated us poor women! and the men, too, to tell the truth, but I didn't mind that so much. He called us cows, and lumps of flesh, and wantons, and mischief-makers—and I could just bear that, for there were plenty others more fleshy and spiteful than I was, though every now and then his voice shook the very bench under me like a trumpet; but then he came to the false hair, and O, misericordia! he made a picture—I see it now—of a young woman lying a pale corpse, and us light-minded widows—of course he meant me as well as the rest, for I had my plaits on, for if one is getting old, one doesn't want to look ugly as the befana, *—us widows rushing up to the corpse, like bare-pated vultures as we were, and cutting off its young dead hair to deck our old heads with. Oh, the dreams I had after that! And then he cried, and wrung his hands

* The name given to the grotesque black-faced figures, supposed to represent the Magi, carried about or placed in the windows on Twelfth Night: a corruption of Epifania.

at us, and I cried too. And to go home, and to take off my jewels, this very clasp, and everything, and to make them into a packet, *fù tutt'uno*; and I was within a hair of sending them to the Good Men of St. Martin to give to the poor, but, by heaven's mercy, I bethought me of going first to my confessor, Fra Cristoforo, at Santa Croce, and he told me how it was all the work of the devil, this preaching and prophesying of their Fra Girolamo, and the Dominicans were trying to turn the world upside down, and I was never to go and hear him again, else I must do penance for it; for the great preachers Fra Mariana and Fra Menico had shown how Fra Girolamo preached lies—and that was true, for I heard them both in the Duomo—and how the Pope's dream of San Francesco propping up the Church with his arms were being fulfilled still, and the Dominicans were beginning to pull it down. Well and good, I went away *con Dio*, and made myself easy. I am not going to be frightened by a Frate Predicatore again. And all I say is, I wish it hadn't been the Dominicans that poor Dino joined years ago, for then I should have been glad when I heard them say he was come back——”

“Silenzio!” said Bardo, in a loud agitated voice, while Romola half started from her chair, clasped her hands, and looked round at Tito, as if now she might appeal to him. Monna Brigida gave a little scream, and bit her lip.

“Donna!” said Bardo, again, “hear once more my will. Bring no reports about that name to this house; and thou, Romola, I forbid thee to ask. My son is dead.”

Bardo's whole frame seemed vibrating with passion, and no one dared to break silence again. Monna Brigida lifted her shoulders and her hands in mute dismay; then she rose as quietly as possible, gave many significant nods to Tito and Romola, motioning to them that they were not to move, and stole out of the room like a culpable fat spaniel who had barked unseasonably.

Meanwhile, Tito's quick mind had been combining ideas with lightning-like rapidity. Bardo's son was not really dead, then, as he had supposed: he was a monk; he was “come back:” and Fra Luca—yes! it was the likeness to Bardo and Romola that had made the face seem half-known to him. If he were only dead at Fiesole at that moment! This importunate selfish wish inevitably thrust itself before every other thought. It was true that Bardo's rigid will was a sufficient safeguard against any intercourse between Romola and her brother;

but *not* against the betrayal of what he knew to others, especially when the subject was suggested by the coupling of Romola's name with that of the very Tito Melema whose description he had carried round his neck as an index. No! nothing but Fra Luca's death could remove all danger; but his death was highly probable, and after the momentary shock of the discovery, Tito let his mind fall back in repose on that confident hope.

They had sat in silence, and in a deepening twilight for many minutes, when Romola ventured to say—

“Shall I light the lamp, father, and shall we go on?”

“No, my Romola, we will work no more to-night. Tito, come and sit by me here.”

Tito moved from the reading-desk, and seated himself on the other side of Bardo, close to his left elbow.

“Come nearer to me, figliuola mia,” said Bardo again, after a moment's pause. And Romola seated herself on a low stool and let her arm rest on her father's right knee, that he might lay his hand on her hair, as he was fond of doing.

“Tito, I never told you that I had once a son,” said Bardo, forgetting what had fallen from him in the emotion raised by their first interview. The old man had been deeply shaken, and was forced to pour out his feelings in spite of pride. “But he left me—he is dead to me. I have disowned him forever. He was a ready scholar as you are, but more fervid and impatient, and yet sometimes rapt and self-absorbed, like a flame fed by some fitful source; showing a disposition from the very first to turn away his eyes from the clear lights of reason and philosophy, and to prostrate himself under the influences of a dim mysticism which eludes all rules of human duty as it eludes all argument. And so it ended. We will speak no more of him: he is dead to me. I wish his face could be blotted from that world of memory in which the distant seems to grow clearer and the near to fade.”

Bardo paused, but neither Romola nor Tito dared to speak—his voice was too tremulous, the poise of his feelings too doubtful. But he presently raised his hand and found Tito's shoulder to rest it on, while he went on speaking, with an effort to be calmer.

“But *you* have come to me, Tito—not quite too late. I will lose no time in vain regret. When you are working by my side I seem to have found a son again.”

The old man, preoccupied with the governing interest

of his life, was only thinking of the much-meditated book which had quite thrust into the background the suggestion, raised by Bernardo del Nero's warning, of a possible marriage between Tito and Romola. But Tito could not allow the moment to pass unused.

"Will you let me be always and altogether your son? Will you let me take care of Romola—be her husband? I think she will not deny me: She has said she loves me. I know I am not equal to her in birth—in anything; but I am no longer a destitute stranger."

"Is it true, my Romola?" said Bardo, in a lower tone, an evident vibration passing through him and dissipating the sudden aspect of his features.

"Yes, father," said Romola, firmly. "I love Tito—I wish to marry him, that we may both be your children and never part."

Tito's hand met hers in a strong clasp for the first time, while she was speaking, but their eyes were fixed anxiously on her father.

"Why should it not be so?" said Bardo, as if arguing against any opposition to his assent, rather than assenting. "It would be a happiness to me; and thou, too, Romola, wouldst be the happier for it."

He stroked her long hair gently and bent toward her.

"Ah, I have been apt to forget that thou needest some other love than mine. And thou wilt be a noble wife. Bernardo thinks I shall hardly find a husband fitting for thee. And he is perhaps right. For thou art not like the herd of thy sex: thou art such a woman as the immortal poets had a vision of when they sang the lives of the heroes—tender but strong, like thy voice, which has been to me instead of the light in the years of my blindness—And so thou lovest him?"

He sat upright again for a minute, and then said, in the same tone as before, "Why should it not be? I will think of it; I will take with Bernardo."

Tito felt a disagreeable chill at this answer, for Bernardo del Nero's eyes had retained their keen suspicion whenever they looked at him, and the uneasy remembrance of Fra Luca converted all uncertainty into fear.

"Speak for me, Romola," he said, pleadingly. "Messer Bernardo is sure to be against me."

"No, Tito," said Romola, "my godfather will not oppose what my father firmly wills. And it is your will that I should marry Tito—is it not true, father? Nothing

has ever come to me before that I have wished for strongly: I did not think it possible that I could care so much for anything that could happen to myself."

It was a brief and simple plea; but it was the condensed story of Romola's self-repressing colorless young life, which had thrown all its passion into sympathy with aged sorrows, aged ambition, aged pride and indignation. It had never occurred to Romola that she should not speak as directly and emphatically of her love for Tito as of any other subject.

"Romola mia!" said her father fondly, pausing on the words, "it is true thou hast never urged on me any wishes of thy own. And I have no will to resist thine; rather, my heart met Tito's entreaty at its very first utterance. Nevertheless, I must talk with Bernardo about the measures needful to be observed. For we must not act in haste, or do anything unbecoming my name. I am poor, and held of little account by the wealthy of our family—nay, I may consider myself a lonely man—but I must nevertheless remember that generous birth has its obligations. And I would not be reproached by my fellow-citizens for rash haste in bestowing my daughter. Bartolommeo Scala gave his Alessandra to the Greek Marullo, but Marullo's lineage was well known, and Scala himself is of no extraction. I know Bernardo will hold that we must take time: he will, perhaps, reproach me with a want of due forethought. Be patient my children: you are very young."

No more could be said, and Romola's heart was perfectly satisfied. Not so Tito's. If the subtle mixture of good and evil prepares suffering for human truth and purity, there is also suffering prepared for the wrong-doer by the same mingled conditions. As Tito kissed Romola on their parting that evening, the very strength of the thrill that moved his whole being at the sense that this woman, whose beauty it was hardly possible to think of as anything but the necessary consequence of her noble nature, loved him with all the tenderness that spoke in her clear eyes, brought a strong reaction of regret that he not kept himself free from that first deceit which had dragged him into the danger of being disgraced before her. There was a spring of bitterness mingling with that fountain of sweets. Would the death of Fra Luca arrest it? He hoped it would.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SHADOW OF NEMESIS.

It was the lazy afternoon time on the seventh of September, more than two months after the day on which Romola and Tito had confessed their love to each other.

Tito, just descended into Nello's shop, had found the barber stretched on the bench with his cap over his eyes; one leg was drawn up, and the other had slipped toward the ground, having apparently carried with it a manuscript volume of verse, which lay with its leaves crushed. In a corner sat Sandro, playing a game at *mora* by himself, and watching the slow reply of his left fingers to the arithmetical demands of his right with solemn-eyed interest.

Treading with the gentlest step, Tito snatched up the lute, and bending over the barber, touched the strings lightly while he sang.—

“Quant' è bella giovinezza,
Che si fugge tuttavia!
Chi vuol esser lieto sia,
Di doman non c'è certezza.”*

Nello was as easily awaked as a bird. The cap was off his eyes in an instant, and he started up.

“Ah, my Apollino! I am somewhat late with my siesta on this hot day, it seems. That comes of not going to sleep in the natural way, but taking a potion of potent poesy. Hear you, how I am beginning to match my words by the initial letter, like a *Trovatore*? That is one of my bad symptoms: I am sorely afraid that the good wine of my understanding is going to run off at the spigot of authorship, and I shall be left an empty cask with an odor of dregs, like many another incomparable genius of my acquaintance. What is it, my Orpheus?” here Nello stretched out his arms to their full length, and then brought them round till his hands grasped Tito's curls, and drew them out playfully. “What is it you want of your well-tamed Nello? For I perceive a coaxing sound in that soft strain of yours. Let me see the very needle's eye of your desire, as the sublime poet says, that I may thread it.”

* “Beauteous is life in blossom!
And it fleeteth—fleeteth ever;
Whoso would be joyful—let him!
There's no surety for the morrow.”

—Carnival Song by Lorenzo de Medici.

"That is but a tailor's image of your sublime poet's," said Tito, still letting his fingers fall in a light dropping way on the strings. "But you have divined the reason of my affectionate impatience to see your eyes open. I want you to give me an extra touch of your art—not on my chin, no; but on the zazzera, which is as tangled as your Florentine politics. You have an adroit way of inserting your comb, which flatters the skin, and stirs the animal spirits agreeably in that region; and a little of your most delicate orange-scent would not be amiss, for I am bound to the Scala palace, and am to present myself in radiant company. The young Cardinal Giovanni de Medici is to be there, and he brings with him a certain young Bernardo Dovizi of Bibbiena, whose wit is so rapid that I see no way of outrivaling it save by the scent of orange-blossoms."

Nello had already seized and flourished his comb, and pushed Tito gently backward into the chair, wrapping the cloth round him.

"Never talk of rivalry, *bel giovane mio*: Bernardo Dovizi is a keen youngster, who will never carry a net out to catch the wind; but he has something of the same sharp-muzzled look as his brother Ser Piero, the weasel that Pierode Medici keeps at his beck to slip through small holes for him. No! you distance all rivals, and may soon touch thesky with your forefinger. They tell me you have even carried enough honey with you to sweeten the sour Messer Angelo; for he has pronounced you less of an ass than might have been expected, considering there is such a goodunderstanding between you and the Secretary."

"And between ourselves, Nello mio, that Messer Angelo has more genius and erudition than I can find in all the other Florentine scholars put together. It may answer very well for them to cry me up now, when Poliziano is beaten down with grief, or illness, or something else; I can try a flight with such a sparrow-hawk as Pietro Crinito, but for Poliziano, he is a large-beaked eagle who would swallow me, feathers and all, and not feel any difference."

"I will not contradict your modesty there, if you will have it so; but you don't expect us clever Florentines to keep saying the same things over again every day of our lives, as we must do if we always told the truth. We cry down Dante, and we cry up Francesco Cei, just for the sake of variety; and if we cry you up as a new Poliziano, heaven has taken care that it shall not be quite so great a lie as it might have been. And are you not a pattern of

virtue in this wicked city? with your ears double-waxed against all siren invitations that would lure you from the Via de Bardi, and the great work which is to astonish posterity?"

"Posterity in good truth, whom it will probably astonish as the universe does, by the impossibility of seeing what was the plan of it."

"Yes, something like that was being prophesied here the other day. Cristoforo Landino said that the excellent Bardo was one of those scholars who lie overthrown in their learning, like cavaliers in heavy armor, and then get angry because they are over-ridden—which pithy remark, it seems to me, was not an herb out of his own garden; for of all men, for feeding one with an empty spoon and gagging one with vain expectation by long discourse, Messer Cristoforo is the pearl. Ecco! you are perfect now." Here Nello drew away the cloth. "Impossible to add a grace more! But love is not always to be fed on learning, eh? I shall have to dress the zazzera for the betrothal before long—is it not true?"

"Perhaps," said Tito, smiling, "unless Messer Bernardo should next recommend Bardo to require that I should yoke a lion and a wild boar to the car of the Zecca before I can win my Alcestis. But I confess he is right in holding me unworthy of Romola; she is a Pleiad that may grow dim by marrying any mortal."

"*Gnaffè*, your modesty is in the right place there. Yet fate seems to have measured and chiseled you for the niche that was left empty by the old man's son, who, by the way, Cronaca was telling me, is now at San Marco. Did you know?"

A slight electric shock passed through Tito as he rose from the chair, but it was not outwardly perceptible, for he immediately stooped to pick up the fallen book, and busied his fingers with flattening the leaves, while he said—

"No; he was at Fiesole, I thought. Are you sure he is come back to San Marco?"

"Cronaca is my authority," said Nello, with a shrug. "I don't frequent that sanctuary, but he does. Ah," he added, taking the book from Tito's hands, "my poor Nencia da Barberino! It jars your scholarly feelings to see the pages dog's-eared. I was lulled to sleep by the well-rhymed charms of that rustic maiden—'prettier than the turnip-flower,' 'with a cheek more savory than

cheese.' But to get such a well-scented notion of the *contadina*, one must lie on velvet cushions in the *Via Larga*—not go to look at the *Fierucoloni* stumping into the *Piazza della Nunziata* this evening after sundown."

"And pray who are the *Fierucoloni*?" said Tito, indifferently, settling his cap.

"The *contadine* who came from the mountains of *Pistoia*, and the *Casentino*, and heaven knows where, to keep their vigil in the church of the *Nunziata*, and sell their yarn and dried mushrooms at the *Fierucola*,* as we call it. They make a queer show, with their paper lanterns, howling their hymns to the *Virgin* on this eve of her nativity—if you had the leisure to see them. No?—well, I have had enough of it myself, for there is wild work in the *Piazza*. One may happen to get a stone or two about one's ears or shins without asking for it, and I was never fond of that pressing attention. *Addio*."

Tito carried a little uneasiness with him on his visit, which ended earlier than he had expected, the boy-cardinal *Giovanni de Medici*, youngest of red-hatted fathers, who has since presented his broad dark cheek very conspicuously to posterity as *Pope Leo the Tenth*, having been detained at his favorite pastime of the chase, and having failed to appear. It still wanted half an hour of sunset as he left the door of the *Scala* palace, with the intention of proceeding forthwith to the *Via de Bardi*; but he had not gone far when, to his astonishment, he saw *Romola* advancing toward him along the *Borgo Pinti*.

She wore a thick black veil and black mantle, but it was impossible to mistake her figure and her walk; and by her side was a short stout form, which he recognized as that of *Monna Brigida*, in spite of the unusual plainness of her attire. *Romola* had not been bred up to devotional observances, and the occasions on which she took the air elsewhere than under the *loggia* on the roof of the house, were so rare and so much dwelt on beforehand, because of *Bardo's* dislike to be left without her, that Tito felt sure there must have been some sudden and urgent ground for an absence of which he had heard nothing the day before. She saw him through her veil and hastened her steps.

"*Romola*, has anything happened?" said Tito, turning to walk by her side.

She did not answer at the first moment, and *Monna Brigida* broke in.

*The little Fair.

"Ah, Messer Tito, you do well to turn round, for we are in haste. And is it not a misfortune?—we are obliged to go round by the walls and turn up the Via del Maglio, because of the fair; for the contadine coming in block up the way by the Nunziata, which would have taken us to San Marco in half the time."

Tito's heart gave a great bound, and began to beat violently.

"Romola," he said, in a lower tone, "are you going to San Marco?"

They were now out of the Borgo Pinti and were under the city walls, where they had wide gardens on their left hand, and all was quiet. Romola put aside her veil for the sake of breathing the air, and he could see the subdued agitation in her face.

"Yes, Tito mio," she said, looking directly at him with sad eyes. "For the first time I am doing something unknown to my father. It comforts me that I have met you, for at least I can tell *you*. But if you are going to him, it will be well for you not to say that you met me. He thinks I am only gone to my cousin, because she sent for me. I left my godfather with him: *he* knows where I am going, and why. You remember that evening when my brother's name was mentioned and my father spoke of him to you?"

"Yes," said Tito, in a low tone. There was a strange complication in his mental state. His heart sank at the probability that a great change was coming over his prospects, while at the same time his thoughts were darting over a hundred details of the course he would take when the change had come; and yet he returned Romola's gaze with a hungry sense that it might be the last time she would ever bend it on him with full unquestioning confidence.

"The *cugina* had heard that he was come back, and the evening before—the evening of San Giovanni—as I afterwards found, he had been seen by our good Maso near the door of our house; but when Maso went to inquire at San Marco, Dino, that is, my brother—he was christened Bernardino, after our godfather, but now he calls himself Fra Luca—had been taken to the monastery at Fiesole, because he was ill. But this morning a message came to Maso, saying that he was come back to San Marco, and Maso went to him there. He is very ill, and he has adjured me to go and see him. I cannot refuse it, though

I hold him guilty; I still remember how I loved him when I was a little girl, before I knew that he would forsake my father. And perhaps he has some word of penitence to send by me. It cost me a struggle to act in opposition to my father's feeling, which I have always held to be just. I am almost sure you will think I have chosen rightly, Tito, because I have noticed that your nature is less rigid than mine, and nothing makes you angry: it would cost you less to be forgiving; though, if you had seen your father forsaken by one to whom he had given his chief love — by one in whom he had planted his labor and his hopes — forsaken when his need was becoming greatest — even you, Tito, would find it hard to forgive."

What could he say? He was not equal to the hypocrisy of telling Romola that such offences ought not to be pardoned; and he had not the courage to utter any words of dissuasion.

"You are right, my Romola; you are always right, except in thinking too well of me."

There was really some genuineness in those last words, and Tito looked very beautiful as he uttered them, with an unusual pallor in his face, and a slight quivering of his lip. Romola, interpreting all things largely, like a mind prepossessed with high beliefs, had a tearful brightness in her eyes as she looked at him, touched with keen joy that he felt so strongly whatever she felt. But without pausing in her walk, she said —

"And now, Tito, I wish you to leave me, for the *cugina* and I shall be less noticed if we enter the piazza alone."

"Yes, it were better you should leave us," said Monna Brigida; "for to say the truth, Messer Tito, all eyes follow you, and let Romola muffle herself as she will, every one wants to see what there is under her veil, for she has that way of walking like a procession. Not that I find fault with her for it, only it doesn't suit my steps. And, indeed, I would rather not have us seen going to San Marco, and that's why I am dressed as if I were one of the Piagononi themselves, and as old as Sant Anna; for if it had been anybody but poor Dino, who ought to be forgiven if he's dying, for what's the use of having a grudge against dead people? — make them feel while they live, say I —"

No one made a scruple of interrupting Monna Brigida, and Tito, having just raised Romola's hand to his lips, and said, "I understand, I obey you," now turned away, lift-

ing his cap—a sign of reverence rarely made at that time by native Florentines, and which excited Bernardo del Nero's contempt for Tito as a fawning Greek, while to Romola, who loved homage, it gave him an exceptional grace.

He was half glad of the dismissal, half disposed to cling to Romola to the last moment in which she would love him without suspicion. For it seemed to him certain that this brother would before all things want to know, and that Romola would before all things confide to him, what was her father's position and her own after the years which must have brought so much change. She would tell him that she was soon to be publicly betrothed to a young scholar, who was to fill up the place left vacant long ago by a wandering son. He foresaw the impulse that would prompt Romola to dwell on that prospect, and what would follow on the mention of the future husband's name. Fra Luca would tell all he knew and conjectured, and Tito saw no possible falsity by which he could now ward off the worst consequences of his former dissimulation. It was all over with his prospects in Florence. There was Messer Bernardo del Nero, who would be delighted at seeing confirmed the wisdom of his advice about deferring the betrothal until Tito's character and position had been established by a longer residence; and the history of the young Greek professor, whose benefactor was in slavery, would be the talk under every loggia. For the first time in his life he felt too fevered and agitated to trust his power of self-command; he gave up his intended visit to Bardo, and walked up and down under the walls until the yellow light in the west had quite faded, when, without any distinct purpose, he took the first turning, which happened to be the Via San Sebastiano, leading him directly toward the Piazza del' Annunziata.

He was at one of those lawless moments which come to us all if we have no guide but desire, and if the pathway where desire leads us seems suddenly closed; he was ready to follow any beckoning that offered him an immediate purpose.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PEASANTS' FAIR.

THE moving crowd and the strange mixture of noises that burst on him at the entrance of the piazza, reminded Tito of what Nello had said to him about the Fierucoloni, and he pushed his way into the crowd with a sort of pleasure in the hooting and elbowing, which filled the empty moments, and dulled that calculation of the future which had so new a dreariness for him, as he foresaw himself wandering away solitary in pursuit of some unknown fortune, that his thoughts had even glanced toward going in search of Baldassarre after all.

At each of the opposite inlets he saw people struggling into the piazza, while above them paper lanterns, held aloft on sticks, were waving uncertainly to and fro. A rude monotonous chant made a distinctly traceable strand of noise, across which screams, whistles, gibing chants in piping boyish voices, the beating of drums, and the ringing of little bells, met each other in confused din. Every now and then one of the dim floating lights disappeared with a smash from a stone launched more or less vaguely in pursuit of mischief, followed by a scream and renewed shouts. But on the outskirts of the whirling tumult there were groups who were keeping this vigil of the Nativity of the Virgin in a more methodical manner than by fitful stone-throwing and gibing. Certain ragged men, darting a hard sharp glance around them, while their tongues rattled merrily, were inviting country people to game with them on fair and open-handed terms; two masquerading figures on stilts, who had snatched lanterns from the crowd, were swaying the lights to and fro in meteoric fashion, as they strode hither and thither; a sage trader was doing a profitable business at a small covered stall, in hot *berlingozzi*, a favorite farinaceous delicacy; one man standing on a barrel, with his back firmly planted against a pillar of the loggia in front of the Foundling Hospital (*Spedale degl' Innocenti*), was selling efficacious pills, invented by a doctor of Lalerno, warranted to prevent toothache and death by drowning; and not far off, against another pillar, a tumbler was showing off his tricks on a small platform; while a handful of 'prentices, despising the slack entertainment of guerilla stone-throwing, were having a private concentrated

match of that favorite Florentine sport at the narrow entrance of the Via de Febbrai.

Tito, obliged to make his way through chance openings in the crowd, found himself at one moment close to the trotting procession of barefooted, hardheeled contadine, and could see their sun-dried, bronzed faces, and their strange, fragmentary garb, dim with hereditary dirt, and of obsolete stuffs and fashions, that made them look, in the eyes of the city people, like a way-worn ancestry returning from a pilgrimage on which they had set out a century ago. Just then it was the hardy, scant-feeding peasant-women from the mountains of Pistoia, who were entering with a year's labor in a moderate bundle of yarn on their backs, and in their hearts that meagre hope of good and that wide dim fear of harm, which were somehow to be cared for by the Blessed Virgin, whose miraculous image, painted by the angels, was to have the curtain drawn away from it on this Eve of her Nativity, that its potency might stream forth without obstruction.

At another moment he was forced away towards the boundary of the piazza, where the more stationary candidates for attention and small coin had judiciously placed themselves, in order to be safe in their rear. Among these Tito recognised his acquaintance Bratti, who stood with his back against a pillar and his mouth pursed up in disdainful silence, eyeing every one who approached him with a cold glance of superiority, and keeping his hand fast on a serge covering which concealed the contents of the basket slung before him. Rather surprised at a deportment so unusual in an anxious trader, Tito went nearer and saw two women go up to Bratti's basket with a look of curiosity, whereupon the pedlar drew the covering tighter, and looked another way. It was quite too provoking, and one of the women was fain to ask what there was in his basket?

"Before I answer that, Monna, I must know whether you mean to buy. I can't show such wares as mine in this fair for every fly to settle on and pay nothing. My goods are a little too choice for that. Besides, I've only two left, and I've no mind to sell them; for with the chances of the pestilence that wise men talk of, there is likelihood of their being worth their weight in gold. No, no: *andate con Dio*."

The two women looked at each other.

"And what may be the price?" said the second.

"Not within what you are likely to have in your purse, buona donna," said Bratti in a compassionately supercilious tone. "I recommend you to trust in Messer Domeneddio and the saints: poor people can do no better for themselves."

"Not so poor!" said the second woman, indignantly, drawing out her money-bag. "Come, now!" what do you say to a grosso?"

"I say you may get twenty-one quattrini for it," said Bratti, coolly; "but not of me, for I haven't got that small change."

"Come; two, then?" said the woman, getting exasperated, while her companion looked at her with some envy. "It will hardly be above two, I think."

After further bidding, and further mercantile coquetry, Bratti put on an air of concession.

"Since you've set your mind on it," he said, slowly rising the cover, "I should be loth to do you a mischief; for Maestro Gabbadeo used to say, when a woman sets her mind on a thing and doesn't get it, she's in worse danger of the pestilence than before. Ecco! I have but two left; and let me tell you, the fellow to them is on the finger of Maestro Gabbadeo, who is gone to Bologna—as wise a doctor as sits at any door."

The precious objects were two clumsy iron rings, beaten into the fashion of old Roman rings, such as were sometimes disinterred. The rust on them, and the entirely hidden character of their potency were so satisfactory that the grossi were paid without grumbling, and the first woman, destitute of those handsome coins, succeeded, after much show of reluctance on Bratti's part, in driving a bargain with some of her yarn, and carried off the remaining ring in triumph. Bratti covered up his basket, which was now filled with miscellanies, probably obtained under the same sort of circumstances as the yarn, and, moving from the pillar, came suddenly upon Tito, who, if he had time, would have chosen to avoid recognition.

"By the head of San Giovanni, now," said Bratti, drawing Tito back to the pillar, "this is a piece of luck. For I was talking of you this morning, Messer Greco; but, I said, he is mounted up among the signori now—and I'm glad of it, for I was at the bottom of his fortune—but I can rarely get speech of him, for he's not to be caught lying on the stones now—not he! But it's your luck, not

mine, Messer Greco, save and except some small trifle to satisfy me for my trouble in the transaction."

"You speak in riddles, Bratti," said Tito. "Remember, I don't sharpen my wits, as you do, by driving hard bargains for iron rings: you must be plain."

"By the Holy Vangels! it was an easy bargain I gave them. If a Hebrew gets thirty-two per cent, I hope a Christian may get a little more. If I had not borne a conscience, I should have got twice the money and twice the money and twice the yarn. But, talking of rings, it is your ring—that very ring you've got on your finger—that I could get you a purchaser for; aye, and a purchaser with a deep money-bag."

"Truly?" said Tito, looking at his ring and listening.

"A Genoese who is going straight away into Hungary, as I understand. He came and looked all over my shop to see if I had any old things I didn't know the price of; I warrant you, he thought I had a pumpkin on my shoulders. He had been rummaging all the shops in Florence. And he had a ring on—not like yours, but something of the same fashion; and as he was talking of rings, I said I knew a fine young man, a particular acquaintance of mine, who had a ring of that sort. And he said, 'Who is he, pray? Tell him I'll give him his price for it.' And I thought of going after you to Nello's to-morrow; for it's my opinion of you, Messer Greco, that you're not one who'd see the Arno run broth, and stand by without dipping your finger."

Tito had lost no word of what Bratti had said, yet his mind had been very busy all the while. Why should he keep the ring? It had been a mere sentiment, a mere fancy, that had prevented him from selling it with the other gems; if he had been wiser and had sold it, he might perhaps have escaped that identification by Fra Luca. It was true that it had been taken from Baldassarre's finger and put on his own as soon as his young hand had grown to the needful size; but there was really no valid good to anybody in those superstitious scruples about inanimate objects. The ring had helped toward the recognition of him. Tito had begun to dislike recognition, which was a claim from the past. This foreigner's offer, if he would really give a good price, was an opportunity for getting rid of the ring without the trouble of seeking a purchaser.

"You speak with your usual wisdom, Bratti," said Tito.

"I have no objection to hear what your Genoese will offer. But when and where shall I have speech of him?"

"To-morrow, at three hours after sunrise, he will be at my shop, and if your wits are of that sharpness I have always taken them to be, Messer Greco, you will ask him a heavy price; for he minds not money. It's my belief he's buying for somebody else, and not for himself—perhaps for some great signor."

"It is well, said Tito. "I will be at your shop, if nothing hinders."

"And you will doubtless deal nobly by me for old acquaintance' sake, Messer Greco, so I will not stay to fix the small sum you will give me in token of my service in the matter. It seems to me a thousand years now till I get out of the piazza, for a fair is a dull, not to say a wicked thing, when one has no more goods to sell."

Tito made a hasty sign of assent and adieu, and moving away from the pillar, again found himself pushed toward the middle of the piazza and back again, without the power of determining his own course. In this zigzag way he was carried along to the end of the piazza opposite the church, where, in a deep recess formed by an irregularity in the line of houses, an entertainment was going forward which seemed to be especially attractive to the crowd. Loud bursts of laughter interrupted a monologue which was sometimes slow and oratorical, at others rattling and buffoonish. Here a girl was being pushed forward into the inner circle with apparent reluctance, and there a loud laughing minx was finding a way with her own elbows. It was a strange light that was spread over the piazza. There were the pale stars breaking out above, and the dim waving lanterns below, leaving all objects indistinct except when they were seen close under the fitfully moving lights; but in this recess there was a stronger light, against which the heads of the encircling spectators stood in dark relief as Tito was gradually pushed toward them, while above them rose the head of a man wearing a white mitre with yellow cabalistic figures upon it.

"Behold, my children!" Tito heard him saying, "behold your opportunity! neglect not the holy sacrament of matrimony when it can be had for the small sum of a white quattrino—the cheapest matrimony ever offered, and dissolved by special bull beforehand at every man's own will and pleasure. Behold the bull!" Here the speaker held up a piece of parchment with huge seals attached to it.

"Behold the indulgence granted by his Holiness Alexander the Sixth, who, being newly elected Pope for his peculiar piety, intends to reform and purify the Church, and wisely begins by abolishing that priestly abuse which keeps too large a share of this privileged matrimony to the clergy and stints the laity. Spit once, my sons, and pay a white quattrino! This is the whole and sole price of the indulgence. The quattrino is the only difference the Holy Father allows to be put any longer between us and the clergy—who spit and pay nothing."

Tito thought he knew the voice, which had a peculiarly sharp ring, but the face was too much in shadow from the lights behind for him to be sure of the features. Stepping at near as he could, he saw within the circle behind the speaker an altar-like table raised on a small platform, and covered with a red drapery stitched all over with yellow cabalistical figures. Half-a-dozen thin tapers burned at the back of this table, which had a conjuring apparatus scattered over it, a large open book in the centre, and at one of the front angles a monkey fastened by a cord to a small ring and holding a small taper, which in his incessant fidgety movements fell more or less aslant, whilst an impish boy in a white surplice occupied himself chiefly in cuffing the monkey, and adjusting the taper. The man in the mitre also wore a surplice, and over it a chasuble on which the signs of the zodiac were rudely marked in black upon a yellow ground. Tito was sure now that he recognized the sharp upward-tending angles of the face under the mitre: it was that of Maestro Vaiano, the mountebank, from whom he had rescued Tessa! Pretty little Tessa! Perhaps she too had come in among the troops of contadine.

"Come, my maidens! This is the time for the pretty who can have many chances, and for the ill-favored who have few. Matrimony to be had—hot, eaten, and done with as easily as *berlingozzi*! And see!" here the conjurer help up a cluster of tiny bags. "To every bride I give a *Breve* with a secret in it—the secret alone worth the money you pay for the matrimony. The secret how to—no, no, I will not tell you what the secret is about, and that makes it a double secret. Hang it round your neck if you like, and never look at it; I don't say *that* will not be the best, for then you will see many things you don't expect: though if you open it you may break your leg, *è vero*, but you will know a secret! Something nobody knows but me! And mark—I give you the *Breve*, I don't

sell it, as many another holy man would: the quattrino is for the matrimony, and the *Breve* you get for nothing. *Orsù, giovanetti*, come like dutiful sons of the Church and buy the Indulgence of his Holiness Alexander the Sixth."

This buffoonery just fitted the taste of the audience; the *fierucola* was but a small occasion, so the townsmen might be contented with jokes that were rather less indecent than those they were accustomed to hear at every carnival, put into easy rhyme by the Magnifico and his poetic satellites; while the women, over and above any relish of the fun, really began to have an itch for the *Brevi*. Several couples had already gone through the ceremony, in which the conjurer's solemn gibberish and grimaces over the open book, the antics of the monkey, and even the preliminary spitting, had called forth peals of laughter; and now a well-looking, merry-eyed youth of seventeen, in a loose tunic and red cap, pushed forward, holding by the hand a plum brunette, whose scanty ragged dress displayed her round arms and legs very picturesquely.

"Fetter us without delay, Maestro!" said the youth, "for I have got to take my bride home and paint her under the light of a lantern."

"Ha! Mariotto, my son, I commend your pious observance——" The conjurer was going on, when a loud chattering behind warned him that an unpleasant crisis had arisen with his monkey.

The temper of that imperfect acolyth was a little tried by the over-active discipline of his colleague in the surplice, and a sudden cuff administered as his taper fell to a horizontal position, caused him to leap back with a violence that proved too much for the slackened knot by which his cord was fastened. His first leap was to the other end of the table, from which position his remonstrances were so threatening that the imp in the surplice took up a wand by way of an equivalent threat, whereupon the monkey leaped on to the head of a tall woman in the foreground, dropping his taper by the way, and chattering with increased emphasis from that eminence. Great was the screaming and confusion, not a few of the spectators having a vague dread of the Maestro's monkey, as capable of more hidden mischief than mere teeth and claws could inflict; and the conjurer himself was in some alarm lest any harm should happen to his familiar. In the scuffle to seize the monkey's string, Tito got out of the circle, and, not caring to contend for his place again, he allowed him-

self to be gradually pushed toward the church of the Nunziata, and to enter among the worshippers.

The brilliant illumination within seemed to press upon his eyes with palpable force after the pale shattered lights and broad shadows of the piazza, and for the first minute or two he could see nothing distinctly. That yellow splendor was in itself something supernatural and heavenly to many of the peasant-women, for whom half the sky was hidden by mountains, and who went to bed in the twilight; and the uninterrupted chant from the choir was repose to the ear after the hellish hubbub of the crowd outside. Gradually the scene became clearer, though still there was a thin yellow haze from incense mingling with the breath of the multitude. In a chapel on the left hand of the nave, wreathed with silver lamps, was seen unveiled the miraculous fresco of the Annunciation, which, in Tito's oblique view of it from the right-hand side of the nave, seemed dark with the excess of light around it. The whole area of the great church was filled with peasant-women, some kneeling, some standing; the coarse, bronze skins, and the dingy clothing of the rougher dwellers on the mountains, contrasting with the softer-lined faces and white or red head-drapery of the well-to-do dwellers in the valley, who were scattered in irregular groups. And spreading high and far over the walls and ceiling there was another multitude, also pressing close against each other, that they might be nearer the potent Virgin. It was the crowd of votive waxen images, the effigies of great personages, clothed in their habit as they lived: Florentines of high name in their black silk lucco, as when they sat in council; popes, emperors, kings, cardinals, and famous condottieri with plumed morion seated on their chargers; all notable strangers who passed through Florence or had aught to do with its affairs—Mohammedans, even, in well-tolerated companionship with Christian cavaliers; some of them with faces blackened and robes tattered by the corroding breath of centuries, others fresh and bright in new red mantle or steel corselet, the exact doubles of the living. And wedged in with all these were detached arms, legs, and other members, with only here and there a gap where some image had been removed for public disgrace, or had fallen ominously, as Lorenzo's had done six months before. It was a perfect resurrection swarm of remote mortals and fragments of mortals, reflecting, in

their varying degrees of freshness, the sombre dinginess and sprinkled brightness of the crowd below.

Tito's glance wandered over the wild multitude in search of something. He had already thought of Tessa, and the white hoods suggested the possibility that he might detect her face under one of them. It was at least a thought to be courted, rather than the vision of Romola looking at him with changed eyes. But he searched in vain; and he was leaving the church, weary of a scene which had no variety, when, just against the doorway, he caught sight of Tessa, only two yards off him. She was kneeling with her back against the wall, behind a group of peasant-women, who were standing and looking for a spot nearer to the sacred image. Her head hung a little aside with a look of weariness, and her blue eyes were directed rather absently toward an altar-piece where the Archangel Michael stood in his armor, with young face and floating hair, amongst bearded and tonsured saints. Her right hand, holding a bunch of cocoons, fell by her side listlessly, and her round cheek was paled, either by the light or by the weariness that was expressed in her attitude: her lips were pressed poutingly together, and every now and then her eyelids half fell. She was a large image of a sweet, sleepy child. Tito felt an irresistible desire to go up to her and get her pretty trusting looks and prattle: this creature who was without moral judgment that could condemn him, whose little loving ignorant soul made a world apart, where he might feel in freedom from suspicions and exacting demands, had a new attraction for him now. She seemed a refuge from the threatened isolation that would come with disgrace. He glanced cautiously round, to assure himself that Monna Ghita was not near, and then, slipping quietly to her side, kneeled on one knee, and said, in the softest voice, "Tessa!"

She hardly started, any more than she would have started at a soft breeze that fanned her gently when she was needing it. She turned her head and saw Tito's face close to her: it was very much more beautiful than the Archangel Michael's, who was so mighty and so good that he lived with the Madonna and all the saints and was prayed to along with them. She smiled in happy silence, for that nearness of Tito quite filled her mind.

"My little Tessa! you look very tired. How long have you been kneeling here?"

She seemed to be collecting her thoughts for a minute or two, and at last she said —

“I’m very hungry.”

“Come, then; come with me.”

He lifted her from her knees, and led her out under the cloisters surrounding the atrium, which were then open, and not yet adorned with the frescos of Andrea del Sarto.

“How is it you are all by yourself, and so hungry, Tessa?”

“The Madre is ill; she has very bad pains in her legs, and sent me to bring these cocoons to the Santissima Nunziata, because they’re so wonderful; see!”—she held up the bunch of cocoons, which were arranged with fortuitous regularity on a stem,—“and she had kept them to bring them herself, but she couldn’t, so she sent me, because she thinks the Holy Madonna may take away her pains; and somebody took my bag with the bread and chestnuts in it, and the people pushed me back, and I was so frightened coming in the crowd, and I couldn’t get anywhere near the Holy Madonna, to give the cocoons to the Padre, but I must—oh, I must.”

“Yes, my little Tessa, you shall take them; but first come and let me give you some berlingozzi. There are some to be had not far off.”

“Where did you come from?” said Tessa, a little bewildered. “I thought you would never come to me again, because you never came to the Mercato for milk any more. I set myself Aves to say, to see if they would bring you back, but I left off, because they didn’t.”

“You see I come when you want some one to take care of you, Tessa. Perhaps the Aves fetched me, only it took them a long while. But what shall you do if you are here all alone? Where shall you go?”

“Oh, I shall stay and sleep in the church—a great many of them do—in the church and all about here—I did once when I came with my mother; and the *patrigno* is coming with the mules in the morning.”

They were out in the piazza now, where the crowd was rather less riotous than before, and the lights were fewer, the stream of pilgrims having ceased. Tessa clung fast to Tito’s arm in satisfied silence, while he led her toward the stall where he remembered seeing the eatables. Their way was the easier because there was just now a great rush toward the middle of the piazza, where the masqued

figures on stilts had found space to execute a dance. It was very pretty to see the guileless thing giving her cocoons into Tito's hand, and then eating her berlingozzi with the relish of a hungry child. Tito had really come to take care of her, as he did before, and that wonderful happiness of being with him had begun again for her. Her hunger was soon appeased, all the sooner for the new stimulus of happiness that had roused her from her languor, and, as they turned away from the stall, she said nothing about going into the church again, but looked round as if the sights in the piazza were not without attraction to her now she was safe under Tito's arm.

"How can they do that?" she exclaimed, looking up at the dancers on stilts. Then, after a minute's silence, "Do you think Saint Christopher helps them?"

"Perhaps. What do you think about it, Tessa?" said Tito, slipping his right arm round her, and looking down at her fondly.

"Because Saint Christopher is so very tall; and he is very good: if anybody looks at him he takes care of them all day. He is on the wall of the church—too tall to stand up there—but I saw him walking through the streets one San Giovanni carrying the little Gesù."

"You pretty pigeon! Do you think anybody could help taking care of *you*, if you looked at them?"

"Shall you always come and take care of me?" said Tessa, turning her face up to him, as he crushed her cheek with his left hand. "And shall you always be a long while first?"

Tito was conscious that some bystanders were laughing at them, and though the license of street fun, among artists and young men of the wealthier sort as well as among the populace, made few adventures exceptional, still less disreputable, he chose to move away toward the end of the piazza.

"Perhaps I shall come again to you very soon, Tessa," he answered, rather dreamily, when they had moved away. He was thinking that when all the rest had turned their backs upon him, it would be pleasant to have this little creature adoring him and nestling against him. The absence of presumptuous self-conceit in Tito made him feel all the more defenceless under prospective obloquy: he needed soft looks and caresses too much ever to be impudent.

"In the Mercato?" said Tessa. "Not to-morrow morning, because the *patrigno* will be there, and he is so cross.

Oh! but you have money, and he will not be cross if you buy some salad. And there are some chestnuts. Do you like chestnuts?"

He said nothing, but continued to look down at her with a dreamy gentleness, and Tessa felt herself in a state of delicious wonder; everything seemed as new as if she were being carried on a chariot of clouds.

"Holy Virgin!" she exclaimed again presently. "There is a holy father like the Bishop I saw at Prato."

Tito looked up too, and saw that he had unconsciously advanced to within a few yards of the conjuror, Maestro Vaiano, who for the moment was forsaken by the crowd. His face was turned away from them, and he was occupied with the apparatus on his altar or table, preparing a new diversion by the time the interest in the dancing should be exhausted. The monkey was imprisoned under the red cloth, out of reach of mischief, and the youngster in the white surplice was holding a sort of dish or salver, from which his master was taking some ingredient. The altar-like table, with its gorgeous cloth, the row of tapers, the sham episcopal costume, the surpliced attendant, and even the movements of the mitred figure, as he alternately bent his head and then raised something before the lights, were a sufficiently near parody of sacred things to rouse poor little Tessa's veneration; and there was some additional awe produced by the mystery of their apparition in this spot, for when she had seen an altar in the street before, it had been on Corpus Christi Day, and there had been a procession to account for it. She crossed herself and looked up at Tito, but then, as if she had had time for reflection, said, "It is because of the Natività."

Meanwhile Vaiano had turned round, raising his hands to his mitre with the intention of changing his dress, when his quick eye recognised Tito and Tessa, who were both looking at him, their faces being shone upon by the light of his tapers, while his own was in shadow.

"Ha! my children!" he said, instantly, stretching out his hands in a benedictory attitude, "you are come to be married. I commend your penitence—the blessing of Holy Church can never come too late."

But whilst he was speaking, he taken in the whole meaning of Tessa's attitude and expression, and he discerned an opportunity for a new kind of joke which required him to be cautious and solemn.

"Should you like to be married to me, Tessa?" said

Tito, softly, half enjoying the comedy, as he saw the pretty childish seriousness on her face, half prompted by hazy previsions which belonged to the intoxication of despair.

He felt her vibrating before she looked up at him and said, timidly, "Will you let me?"

He answered only by a smile, and by leading her forward in front of the *cerretano*, who, seeing an excellent jest in Tessa's evident delusion, assumed a surpassing sacerdotal solemnity, and went through the mimic ceremony with a liberal expenditure of *lingua furbesca* or thieves' Latin. But some symptoms of a new movement in the crowd urged him to bring it to a speedy conclusion and dismiss them with hands outstretched in a benedictory attitude over their kneeling figures. Tito, disposed always to cultivate goodwill, though it might be the least select, put a piece of four grossi into his hand as he moved away, and was thanked by a look which the conjurer felt sure, conveyed a perfect understanding of the whole affair.

But Tito himself was very far from that understanding, and did not, in fact, know whether, the next moment, he should tell Tessa of the joke and laugh at her for a little goose, or whether he should let her delusion last, and see what would come of it—see what she would say and do next.

"Then you will not go away from me again," said Tessa, after they had walked a few steps, "and you will take me to where you live." She spoke meditatively, and not in a questioning tone. But presently she added, "I must go back at once to the Madre though, to tell her I brought the cocoons, and that I am married, and shall not go back again."

Tito felt the necessity of speaking now; and in the rapid thought prompted by that necessity, he saw that by undeceiving Tessa he should be robbing himself of some at least of that pretty trustfulness which might, by-and-by, be his only haven from contempt. It would spoil Tessa to make her the least particle wiser or more suspicious.

"Yes, my little Tessa," he said caressingly, "you must go back to the Madre; but you must not tell her you are married—you must keep that a secret from everybody: else some very great harm would happen to me, and you would never see me again."

She looked up at him with fear in her face.

"You must go back and feed your goats and mules, and

do just as you have always done before, and say no word to any one about me."

The corners of her mouth fell a little.

"And then, perhaps, I shall come and take care of you again when you want me, as I did before. But you must do just what I tell you, else you will not see me again."

"Yes, I will, I will," she said, in a loud whisper, frightened at that blank prospect.

They were silent a little while; and then Tessa, looking at her hand, said—

"The Madre wears a betrothal ring. She went to church and had it put on, and then after that, another day, she was married. And so did the cousin Nannina. But then *she* married Gollo," added the poor little thing, entangled in the difficult comparison between her own case and others within her experience.

"But you must not wear a betrothal ring, my Tessa, because no one must know you are married," said Tito, feeling some insistence necessary. "And the *buona fortuna* that I gave you did just as well for betrothal. Some people are betrothed with rings and some are not."

"Yes, it is true, they would see the ring," said Tessa, trying to convince herself that a thing she would like very much was really not good for her.

They were now near the entrance of the church again, and she remembered her cocoons which were still in Tito's hand.

"Ah, you must give me the *boto*," she said; "and we must go in, and I must take it to the Padre, and I must tell the rest of my beads, because I was too tired before."

"Yes, you must go in, Tessa; but I will not go in. I must leave you now," said Tito, too feverish and weary to re-enter that stifling heat, and feeling that this was the least difficult way of parting with her.

"And not come back? Oh, where do you go?" Tessa's mind had never formed an image of his whereabouts or his doings when she did not see him: he had vanished, and her thought, instead of following him, had stayed in the same spot where he was with her.

"I shall come back some time, Tessa," said Tito, taking her under the cloisters to the door of the church. "You must not cry—you must go to sleep, when you have said your beads. And here is money to buy your breakfast. Now kiss me, and look happy, else I shall not come again."

She made a great effort over herself as she put up her

lips to kiss him, and submitted to be gently turned round, with her face toward the door of the church. Tito saw her enter; and then with a shrug at his own resolution, leaned against a pillar, took off his cap, rubbed his hair backward, and wondered where Romola was now, and what she was thinking of him. Poor little Tessa had disappeared behind the curtain among the crowd of peasants; but the love which formed one web with all his worldly hopes, with the ambitions and pleasures that must make the solid part of his days—the love that was identified with his larger self—was not to be banished from his consciousness. Even to the man who presents the most elastic resistance to whatever is unpleasant, there will come moments when the pressure from without is too strong for him, and he must feel the smart and the bruise in spite of himself. Such a moment had come to Tito. There was no possible attitude of mind, no scheme of action by which the uprooting of all his newly-planted hopes could be made otherwise than painful.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DYING MESSAGE.

WHEN Romola arrived at the entrance of San Marco she found one of the Frati waiting there in expectation of her arrival. Monna Brigida retired into the adjoining church, and Romola was conducted to the door of the chapter-house in the outer cloister, whither the invalid had been conveyed; no woman being allowed admission beyond this precinct.

When the door opened, the subdued external light blending with that of two tapers placed behind a truckle-bed, showed the emaciated face of Fra Luca, with the tonsured crown of golden hair above it, and with deep-sunken hazel eyes fixed on a small crucifix which he held before him. He was propped up into nearly a sitting posture; and Romola was just conscious, as she threw aside her veil, that there was another monk standing by the bed, with the black cowl drawn over his head, and that he moved toward the door as she entered; just conscious that in the background there was a crucified form rising high

and pale on the frescoed wall, and pale faces of sorrow looking out from it below.

The next moment her eyes met Fra Luca's as they looked up at her from the crucifix, and she was absorbed in that pang of recognition which identified this monkish emaciated form with the image of her fair young brother.

"Dino!" she said, in a voice like a low cry of pain. But she did not bend toward him; she held herself erect, and paused at two yards' distance from him. There was an unconquerable repulsion for her in that monkish aspect; it seemed to her the brand of the dastardly undutifulness which had left her father desolate—of the groveling superstition which could give such undutifulness the name of piety. Her father, whose proud sincerity and simplicity of life had made him one of the few frank pagans of his time, had brought her up with a silent ignoring of any claims the Church could have to regulate the belief and action of beings with a cultivated reason. The Church, in her mind, belonged to that actual life of the mixed multitude from which they had always lived apart, and she had no ideas that could render her brother's course an object of any other feeling than incurious, indignant contempt. Yet the lovingness of Romola's soul had clung to that image in the past, and while she stood rigidly aloof, there was a yearning search in her eyes for something too faintly discernible.

But there was no corresponding emotion in the face of the monk. He looked at the little sister returned to him in her full womanly beauty, with the far-off gaze of a revisiting spirit.

"My sister!" he said, with a feeble and interrupted but yet distinct utterance, "it is well thou hast not longer delayed to come, for I have a message to deliver to thee, and my time is short."

Romola took a step nearer: the message, she thought, would be one of affectionate penitence to her father, and her heart began to open. Nothing could wipe out the long years of desertion; but the culprit, looking back on those years with the sense of irremediable wrong committed, would call forth pity. Now, at the last, there would be understanding and forgiveness. Dino would pour out some natural filial feeling; he would ask questions about his father's blindness—how rapidly it had come on? how the long dark days had been filled? what the life was now in the home where he himself had been

nourished?—and the last message from the dying lips would be one of tenderness and regret.

“Romola,” Fra Luca began, “I have had a vision concerning thee. Thrice I have had it in the last two months: each time it has been clearer. Therefore I came from Fiesole, deeming it a message from heaven that I was bound to deliver. And I gather a promise of mercy to thee in this, that my breath is preserved in order to—”

The difficult breathing which continually interrupted him would not let him finish the sentence.

Romola had felt her heart chilling again. It was a vision, then, this message—one of those visions she had so often heard her father allude to with bitterness. Her indignation rushed to her lips.

“Dino, I thought you had some words to send to my father. You forsook him when his sight was failing; you made his life very desolate. Have you never cared about that? never repented? What is this religion of yours, that places visions before natural duties?”

The deep-sunken hazel eyes turned slowly toward her, and rested upon her in silence for some moments, as if he were meditating whether he should answer her.

“No,” he said at last; speaking, as before, in a low, passionless tone, as of some spirit not human, speaking through dying human organs. “No; I have never repented fleeing from the stifling poison-breath of sin that was hot and thick around me, and threatened to steal over my senses like besotting wine. My father could not hear the voice that called me night and day; he knew nothing of the demon-tempters that tried to drag me back from following it. My father has lived amidst human sin and misery without believing in them: he has been like one busy picking shining stones in a mine, while there was a world dying of plague above him. I spoke, but he listened with scorn. I told him the studies he wished me to live for were either childish trifling—dead toys—or else they must be made warm and living by pulses that beat to worldly ambitions and fleshly lusts, for worldly ambitions and fleshly lusts made all the substance of the poetry and history he wanted me to bend my eyes on continually.”

“Has not my father led a pure and noble life, then?” Romola burst forth, unable to hear in silence this implied accusation against her father. “He has sought no worldly honors; he has been truthful; he has denied him-

self all luxuries; he has lived like one of the ancient sages. He never wished you to live for worldly ambitions and fleshly lusts; he wished you to live as he himself has done, according to the purest maxims of philosophy, in which he brought you up."

Romola spoke partly by rote, as all ardent and sympathetic young creatures do; but she spoke with intense belief. The pink flush was in her face, and she quivered from head to foot. Her brother was again slow to answer; looking at her passionate face with strange passionless eyes.

"What were the maxims of philosophy to me? They told me to be strong when I felt myself weak; when I was ready, like the blessed Saint Benedict, to roll myself among thorns, and court smarting wounds as a deliverance from temptation. For the Divine love had sought me, and penetrated me, and created a great need in me; like a seed that wants room to grow. I had been brought up in carelessness of the true faith; I had not studied the doctrines of our religion; but it seemed to take possession of me like a rising flood. I felt that there was a life of perfect love and purity for the soul; in which there would be no uneasy hunger after pleasure, no tormenting questions, no fear of suffering. Before I knew the history of the saints, I had a foreshadowing of their ecstasy. For the same truth had penetrated even into pagan philosophy: that it is a bliss within the reach of man to die to mortal needs, and live in the life of God as the unseen perfectness. But to attain that I must forsake the world: I must have no affection, no hope, wedding me to that which passeth away: I must live with my fellow-beings only as human souls related to the eternal unseen life. That need was urging me continually: it came over me in visions when my mind fell away weary from the vain words which record the passions of dead men: it came over me after I had been tempted into sin and had turned away with loathing from the scent of the emptied cup. And in visions I saw the meaning of the Crucifix."

He paused, breathing hard for a minute or two: but Romola was not prompted to speak again. It was useless for her mind to attempt any contact with the mind of this unearthly brother: as useless as for her hand to try and grasp a shadow. When he spoke again his heaving chest was quieter.

"I felt whom I must follow: but I saw that even among

the servants of the Cross who professed to have renounced the world, my soul would be stifled with the fumes of hypocrisy, and lust, and pride. God had not chosen me, as he chose Saint Dominic and Saint Francis, to wrestle with evil in the Church and in the world. He called upon me to flee: I took the sacred vows and I fled—fled to lands where danger and scorn and want bore me continually, like angels to repose on the bosom of God. I have lived the life of a hermit, I have ministered to pilgrims; but my task has been short: the veil has worn very thin that divides me from my everlasting rest. I came back to Florence that—”

“Dino, you *did* want to know if my father was alive,” interrupted Romola, the picture of that suffering life touching her again with the desire for union and forgiveness.

“—— that before I died I might urge others of our brethren to study the Eastern tongues, as I had not done, and go out to greater ends than I did; and I find them already bent on the work. And since I came, Romola, I have felt that I was sent partly to thee—not to renew the bonds of earthly affection, but to deliver the heavenly warning conveyed in a vision. For I have had that vision thrice. And through all the years since first the Divine voice called me, while I was yet in the world, I have been taught and guided by visions. For in the painful linking together of our waking thoughts we can never be sure that we have not mingled our own error with the light we have prayed for; but in visions and dreams we are passive, and our souls are as an instrument in the Divine hand. Therefore listen, and speak not again—for the time is short.”

Romola's mind recoiled strongly from listening to this vision. Her indignation had subsided, but it was only because she had felt the distance between her brother and herself widening. But while Fra Luca was speaking, the figure of another monk had entered, and again stood on the other side of the bed, with the cowl drawn over his head.

“Kneel, my daughter, for the Angel of Death is present, and waits while the message of heaven is delivered: bend thy pride before it is bent for thee by a yoke of iron,” said a strong rich voice, startingly in contrast with Fra Luca's.

The tone was not that of imperious command, but of quiet self-possession and assurance of the right, blended

with benignity. Romola, vibrating to the sound, looked round at the figure on the opposite side of the bed. His face was hardly discernible under the shadow of the cowl, and her eyes fell at once on his hands, which were folded across his breast and lay in relief on the edge of his black mantle. They had a marked physiognomy which enforced the influence of the voice: they were very beautiful and almost of transparent delicacy. Romola's disposition to rebel against command, doubly active in the presence of monks, whom she had been taught to despise, would have fixed itself on any repulsive detail as a point of support. But the face was hidden, and the hands seemed to have an appeal in them against all hardness. The next moment the right hand took the crucifix to relieve the fatigued grasp of Fra Luca, and the left touched his lips with a wet sponge which lay near. In the act of bending, the cowl was pushed back, and the features of the monk had the full light of the tapers on them. They were very marked features, such as lend themselves to popular description. There was the high arched nose, the prominent under lip, the coronet of thick dark hair above the brow, all seeming to tell of energy and passion; there were the blue-gray eyes, shining mildly under auburn eyelashes, seeming, like the hands, to tell of acute sensitiveness. Romola felt certain they were the features of Fra Girolama Savonarola, the prior of San Marco, whom she had chiefly thought of as more offensive than other monks, because he was more noisy. Her rebellion was rising against the first impression, which had almost forced her to bend her knees.

"Kneel, my daughter," the penetrating voice said again, "the pride of the body is a barrier against the gifts that purify the soul."

He was looking at her with mild fixedness while he spoke, and again she felt that subtle mysterious influence of personality by which it has been given to some rare men to move their fellows.

Slowly Romola fell on her knees, and in the very act a tremor came over her; in the renunciation of her proud erectness, her mental attitude seemed changed, and she found herself in a new state of passiveness. Her brother began to speak again—

"Romola, in the deep night, as I lay awake, I saw my father's room—the library—with all the books and the marbles and the leggio, where I used to stand and read; and I saw you—you were revealed to me as I see you now,

with fair long hair, sitting before my father's chair. And at the leggio stood a man whose face I could not see. I looked, and looked, and it was a blank to me, even as a painting effaced; and I saw him move and take thee, Romola, by the hand; and then I saw thee take my father by the hand; and you all three went down the stone steps into the streets, the man whose face was a blank to me leading the way. And you stood at the altar in Santa Croce, and the priest who married you had the face of death; and the graves opened, and the dead in their shrouds rose and followed you like a bridal train. And you passed on through the streets and the gates into the valley, and it seemed to me that he who led you hurried you more than you could bear, and the dead were weary of following you, and turned back to their graves. And at last you came to a stony place where there was no water, and no trees or herbage; but instead of water, I saw written parchment unrolling itself everywhere, and instead of trees and herbage I saw men of bronze and marble springing up and crowding round you. And my father was faint for want of water and fell to the ground; and the man whose face was a blank loosed thy hand and departed: and as he went I could see his face; and it was the face of the Great Tempter. And thou, Romola, didst wring thy hands and seek for water, and there was none. And the bronze and marble figures seemed to mock thee and hold out cups of water, and when thou didst grasp them and put them to my father's lips, they turned to parchment. And the bronze and marble figures seemed to turn into demons and snatch my father's body from thee, and the parchments shrivelled up; and blood ran everywhere instead of them, and fire upon the blood, till they all vanished, and the plain was bare and stony again, and thou wast alone in the midst of it. And then it seemed that the night fell and I saw no more. Thrice I have had that vision, Romola. I believe it is a revelation meant for thee: to warn thee against marriage as a temptation of the enemy; it calls upon thee to dedicate thyself——"

His pauses had gradually become longer and more frequent, and he was now compelled to cease by a severe fit of gasping, in which his eyes were turned on the crucifix as on a light that was vanishing. Presently he found strength to speak again, but in a feebler, scarcely audible tone.

"To renounce the vain philosophy and corrupt thoughts

of the heathens: for in the hour of sorrow and death their pride will turn to mockery, and the unclean gods will —”

The words died away.

In spite of the thought that was at work in Romola, telling her that this vision was no more than a dream, fed by youthful memories and ideal convictions, a strange awe had come over her. Her mind was not apt to be assailed by sickly fancies; she had the vivid intellect and the healthy human passion, which are too keenly alive to the constant relations of things to have any morbid craving after the exceptional. Still the images of the vision she despised jarred and distressed her like painful and cruel cries. And it was the first time she had witnessed the struggle with approaching death: her young life had been sombre, but she had known nothing of the utmost human needs; no acute suffering—no heart-cutting sorrow; and this brother, come back to her in his hour of supreme agony, was like a sudden awful apparition from an invisible world. The pale faces of sorrow in the fresco on the opposite wall seemed to have come nearer, and to make one company with the pale face on the bed.

“Frate,” said the dying voice.

Fra Girolamo leaned down. But no other words came for some moments.

“Romola,” it said next.

She leaned forward too: but again there was silence. The words were struggling in vain.

“Fra Girolamo, give her——”

“The crucifix,” said the voice of Fra Girolamo.

No other sound came from the dying lips.

“Dino!” said Romola, with a low but piercing cry, as the certainty came upon her that the silence of misunderstanding could never be broken.

“Take the crucifix, my daughter,” said Fra Girolamo, after a few minutes. “His eyes behold it no more.”

Romola stretched out her hand to the crucifix, and this act appeared to relieve the tension of her mind. A great sob burst from her. She bowed her head by the side of her dead brother, and wept aloud.

It seemed to her as if this first vision of death must alter the daylight for her for evermore.

Fra Girolamo moved toward the door, and called in a lay Brother who was waiting outside. Then he went up to Romola and said in a tone of gentle command, “Rise

my daughter, and be comforted. Our brother is with the blessed. He has left you the crucifix, in remembrance of the heavenly warning—that it may be a beacon to you in the darkness.”

She rose from her knees, trembling, folded her veil over her head, and hid the crucifix under her mantle. Fra Girolamo then lead the way out into the cloistered court, lit now only by the stars and by a lantern, which was held by some one near the entrance. Several other figures in the dress of the dignified laity were grouped about the same spot. They were some of the numerous frequenters of San Marco, who had come to visit the Prior, and having heard that he was in attendance on the dying Brother in the chapter-house, had awaited him here.

Romola was dimly conscious of footsteps and rustling forms moving aside: she heard the voice of Fra Girolamo saying, in a low tone, “Our brother is departed;” she felt a hand laid on her arm. The next moment the door was opened, and she was out in the wide piazza of San Marco, with no one but Monna Brigida, and the servant carrying the lantern.

The fresh sense of space revived her, and helped her to recover her self-mastery. The scene which had just closed upon her was terribly distinct and vivid, but it began to narrow under the returning impressions of the life that lay outside it. She hastened her steps, with nervous anxiety to be again with her father—and with Tito—for were they not together in her absence? The images of that vision, while they clung about her like a hideous dream, not yet to be shaken off, made her yearn all the more for the beloved faces and voices that would assure her of her waking life.

Tito, we know, was not with Bardo; his destiny was being shaped by a guilty consciousness, urging on him the despairing belief that by this time Romola possessed the knowledge which would lead to their final separation.

And the lips that could have conveyed that knowledge were forever closed. The prevision that Fra Luca’s words had imparted to Romola had been such as comes from the shadowy region where human souls seek wisdom apart from the human sympathies which are the very life and substance of our wisdom; the revelation that might have come from the simple questions of filial and brotherly affection had been carried into irrevocable silence.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FLORENTINE JOKE.

EARLY the next morning Tito was returning from Bratti's shop in the narrow thoroughfare of the Ferravecchi. The Genoese stranger had carried away the onyx ring, and Tito was carrying away fifty florins. It did just cross his mind that if, after all, Fortune, by one of her able devices, saved him from the necessity of quitting Florence, it would be better for him not to have parted with his ring, since he had been understood to wear it for the sake of peculiar memories and predilections; still, it was a slight matter, not worth dwelling on with any emphasis, and in those moments he had lost his confidence in fortune. The feverish excitement of the first alarm which had impelled his mind to travel into the future had given place to a dull, regretful lassitude. He cared so much for the pleasures that could only come to him through the good opinion of his fellow-men, that he wished now he had never risked ignominy by shrinking from what his fellow-men called obligations.

But our deeds are like children that are born to us; they live and act apart from our own will. Nay, children may be strangled, but deeds never: they have an indestructible life both in and out of our consciousness; and that dreadful vitality of deeds was pressing hard on Tito for the first time.

He was going back to his lodgings in the Piazza di San Giovanni, but he avoided passing through the Mercato Vecchio, which was his nearest way, lest he should see Tessa. He was not in the humor to seek anything; he could only await the first sign of his altering lot.

The piazza with its sights of beauty was lit up by that warm morning sunlight under which the autumn dew still lingers, and which invites to an idlesse undulled by fatigue. It was a festival morning, too, when the soft warmth seems to steal over one with a special invitation to lounge and gaze. Here, too, the signs of the fair were present; in the spaces round the octagonal baptistery, stalls were being spread with fruits and flowers, and here and there laden mules were standing quietly absorbed in their nose bags, while their drivers were perhaps gone through the hospitable sacred doors to kneel before the

blessed Virgin on this morning of her Nativity. On the broad marble steps of the Duomo there were scattered groups of beggars and gossiping talkers: here an old crone with white hair and hard sunburnt face encouraging a round-capped baby to try its tiny bare feet on the warmed marble, while a dog sitting near snuffed at the performance suspiciously; there a couple of shaggy-headed boys leaning to watch a small pale cripple who was cutting a face on a cherry-stone; and above them on the wide platform men were making changing knots in laughing desultory chat, or else were standing in close couples gesticulating eagerly.

But the largest and most important company of loungers was that toward which Tito had to direct his steps. It was the busiest time of the day with Nello, and in this warm season and at an hour when clients were numerous, most men preferred being shaved under the pretty red and white awning in front of the shop rather than within narrow walls. It is not a sublime attitude for a man, to sit with lathered chin thrown backward, and have his nose made a handle of; but to be shaved was a fashion of Florentine respectability, and it is astonishing how gravely men look at each other when they are all in the fashion. It was the hour of the day, too, when yesterday's crop of gossip was freshest, and the barber's tongue was always in its glory when his razor was busy; the deft activity of those two instruments seemed to be set going by a common spring. Tito foresaw that it would be impossible for him to escape being drawn into the circle; he must smile and retort, and look perfectly at his ease. Well! it was but the ordeal of swallowing bread and cheese pills after all. The man who let the mere anticipation of discovery choke him was simply a man of weak nerves.

But just at that time Tito felt a hand laid on his shoulder, and no amount of previous resolution could prevent the very unpleasant sensation with which that sudden touch jarred him. His face, as he turned it round, betrayed the inward shock; but the owner of the hand that seemed to have such evil magic in it broke into a light laugh. He was a young man about Tito's own age, with keen features, small close-clipped head, and close-shaven lip and chin, giving the idea of a mind as little encumbered as possible with material that was not nervous. The keen eyes were bright with hope and friendliness, as so many other young eyes have been that have afterward closed on the world in

bitterness and disappointment; for at that time there were none but pleasant predictions about Niccolò Macchiavelli, as a young man of promise, who was expected to mend the broken fortunes of his ancient family.

"Why, Melema, what evil dream did you have last night, that you took my light grasp for that of a *sbirro* or something worse?"

"Ah, Messer Niccolò!" said Tito, recovering himself immediately; "it must have been an extra amount of dullness in my veins this morning that shuddered at the approach of your wit. But the fact is, I have had a bad night."

"That is unlucky, because you will be expected to shine without any obstructing fog to-day in the Rucellai Gardens. I take it for granted you are to be there."

"Messer Bernardo did me the honor to invite me," said Tito; "but I shall be engaged elsewhere."

"Ah! I remember, you are in love," said Macchiavelli, with a shrug, "else you would never have such inconvenient engagements. Why we are to eat a peacock and ortolans under the loggia among Bernardo Rucellai's rare trees; there are to be the choicest spirits in Florence and the choicest wines. Only, as Piero de Medici is to be there, the choice spirits may happen to be swamped in the capping of impromptu verses. I hate that game; it is a device for the triumph of small wits, who are always inspired the most by the smallest occasions."

"What is that you are saying about Piero de Medici and small wits, Messer Niccolò?" said Nello, whose light figure was at that moment predominating over the Herculean frame of Niccolò Caparra.

That famous worker in iron, whom we saw last with bared muscular arms and leathern apron in the Mercato Vecchio, was this morning dressed in holiday suit, and as he sat submissively while Nello skipped round him, lathered him, seized him by the nose, and scraped him with magical quickness, he looked much as a lion might if it had donned linen and tunic and was preparing to go into society.

"A private secretary will never rise in the world if he couples great and small in that way," continued Nello. "When great men are not allowed to marry their sons and daughters as they like, small men must not expect to marry their words as they like. Have you heard the news Domenico Cennini, here, has been telling us?—that Pagolantonio Soderini has given Ser Piero da Bibbiena a box on

the ear for setting on Piero de Medici to interfere with the marriage between young Tommaso Soderini and Fiammetta Strozzi, and is to be sent ambassador to Venice as a punishment?"

"I don't know which I envy-him most," said Macchia-velli, "the offence or the punishment. The offence will make him the most popular man in all Florence, and the punishment will take him among the only people in Italy who have known how to manage their own affairs."

"Yes, if Soderini stays long enough at Venice," said Cennini, "he may chance to learn the Venetian fashion, and bring it home with him. The Soderini have been fast friends of the Medici, but what has happened is likely to open Pagolantonio's eyes to the good of our old Florentine trick of choosing a new harness when the old one galls us; if we have not quite lost the trick in these last fifty years."

"Not we," said Niccolò Caparra, who was rejoicing in the free use of his lips again. "Eat eggs in Lent and the snow will melt. That's what I say to our people when they get noisy over their cups at San Gallo, and talk of raising a *romor* (insurrection): I say, never do you plan a *romor*; you may as well try to fill Arno with buckets. When there's water enough Arno will be full, and that will not be till the torrent is ready."

"Caparra, that oracular speech of yours is due to my excellent shaving," said Nello. "You could never have made it with that dark rust on your chin. Ecco, Messer Domenico, I am ready for you now. By the way, my bel erudito," continued Nello, as he saw Tito moving toward the door, "here has been old Maso seeking for you, but your nest was empty. He will come again presently. The old man looked mournful, and seemed in haste. I hope there is nothing wrong in the Via de Bardi."

"Doubtless Messer Tito knows that Bardo's son is dead," said Cronaca, who had just come up.

Tito's heart gave a leap—had the death happened before Romola saw him?

"No, I had not heard it," he said, with no more discomposure than the occasion seemed to warrant, turning and leaning against the doorpost, as if he had given up his intention of going away. "I knew that his sister had gone to see him. Did he die before she arrived?"

"No," said Cronaca; "I was in San Marco at the time, and saw her come out from the chapter-house with Fra Girolamo, who told us that the dying man's breath had

been preserved as by a miracle, that he might make a disclosure to his sister."

Tito felt that his fate was decided. Again his mind rushed over all the circumstances of his departure from Florence, and he conceived a plan of getting back his money from Cennini before the disclosure had become public. If he once had his money he need not stay long in endurance of scorching looks and biting words. He would wait now, and go away with Cennini and get the money from him at once. With that project in his mind he stood motionless—his hands in his belt, his eyes fixed absently on the ground. Nello, glancing at him, felt sure that he was absorbed in anxiety about Romola, and thought him such a pretty image of self-forgetful sadness, that he just perceptibly pointed his razor at him, and gave a challenging look at Piero di Cosimo, whom he had never forgiven for his refusal to see any prognostics of character in his favorite's handsome face. Piero, who was leaning against the other doorpost, close to Tito, shrugged his shoulders: the frequent recurrence of such challenges from Nello had changed the painter's first declaration of neutrality into a positive inclination to believe ill of the much-praised Greek.

"So you have got your Fra Girolamo back again, Cronaca? I suppose we shall have him preaching again this next Advent," said Nello.

"And not before there is need," said Cronaca, gravely. "We have had the best testimony to his words since the last Quaresima; for even to the wicked wickedness has become a plague; and the ripeness of vice is turning to rottenness in the nostrils of the vicious. There has not been a chance since the Quaresima, either in Rome or at Florence, but has put a new seal on the Frate's words—that the harvest of sin is ripe, and that God will reap it with a sword."

"I hope he has had a new vision, however," said Francesco Cei, sneeringly. "The old ones are somewhat stale. Can't your Frate get a poet to help out his imagination for him?"

"He has no lack of poets about him," said Cronaca, with quiet contempt, "but they are great poets and not little ones; so they are contented to be taught by him, and no more think the truth stale which God has given him to utter, than they think the light of the moon is stale. But perhaps certain high prelates and princes who dislike the

Frate's denunciations might be pleased to hear that, though Giovanni Pico, and Poliziano, and Marsilio Ficino, and most other men of mark in Florence, reverence Fra Girolamo, Messer Francesco Cei despises him."

"Paliziano?" said Cei, with a scornful laugh. "Yes, doubtless he believes in your new Jonah; witness the fine orations he wrote for the envoys of Sienna, to tell Alexander the Sixth that the world and the Church were never so well off as since he became Pope."

"Nay, Francesco," said Macchiavelli, smiling, "a various scholar must have various opinions. And as for the Frate, whatever we may think of his saintliness, you judge his preaching too narrowly. The secret of oratory lies, not in saying new things, but in saying things with a certain power that moves the hearers—without which, as old Filelfo has said, your speaker deserves to be called, '*non oratorum, sed aratorem*.' And, according to that test, Fra Girolamo is a great orator."

"That is true, Niccolò," said Cennini, speaking from the shaving chair, "but part of the secret lies in the prophetic visions. Our people—no offense to you, Cronaco—will run after anything in the shape of a prophet, especially if he prophesies terrors and tribulations."

"Rather say, Cennini," answered Cronaca, "that the chief secret lies in the Frate's pure life and strong faith, which stamp him as a messenger of God."

"I admit it—I admit it," said Cennini, opening his palms, as he rose from the chair. "His life is spotless: no man has impeached it."

"He is satisfied with the pleasant lust of arrogance," Cei burst out, bitterly. "I can see it in that proud lip and satisfied eye of his. He hears the air filled with his own name—Fra Girolamo Savonarola, of Ferrara; the prophet, the saint, the mighty preacher, who frightens the very babies of Florence into laying down their wicked baubles."

"Come, come, Francesco, you are out of humor with waiting," said the conciliatory Nello. "Let me stop your mouth with a little lather. I must not have my friend Cronaca made angry: I have a regard for his chin: and his chin is in no respect altered since he became a Piagnone. And for my own part, I confess, when the Frate was preaching in the Duomo last Advent, I got into such a trick of slipping in to listen to him that I might have turned Piagnone too, if I had not been hindered by the

liberal nature of my art; and also by the length of the sermons, which are sometimes a good while before they get to the moving point. But, as Messer Niccolò here says, the Frate lays hold of the people by some power over and above his prophetic visions. Monks and nuns who prophesy are not of that rareness. For what says Luigi Pulci? 'Dombruno's sharp-cutting scimitar had the fame of being enchanted; but,' says Luigi, 'I am rather of opinion that it cut sharp because it was of strongly-tempered steel.' Yes, yes; Paternosters may shave clean, but they must be said over a good razor."

"See, Nello!" said Macchiavelli, "what doctor is this advancing on his Bucephalus? I thought your piazza was free from those furred and scarlet-robed lackeys of death. This man looks as if he had had some such night adventure as Boccaccio's Maestro Simone, and had his bonnet and mantle pickled a little in the gutter; though he himself is as sleek as a miller's rat."

"A-ah!" said Nello, with a long-drawn intonation, as he looked up toward the advancing figure—a round-headed, round-bodied personage, seated on a raw young horse, which held its nose out with an air of threatening obstinacy, and by a constant effort to back and go off in an oblique line showed free views about authority very much in advance of the age.

"And I have a few more adventures in pickle for him," continued Nello, in an undertone, "which I hope will drive his inquiring nostrils to another quarter of the city. He's a doctor from Padua; they say he has been at Prato for three months, and now he's come to Florence to see what he can net. But his great trick is making rounds among the contadini. And do you note those great saddlebags he carries? They are to hold the fat capons and eggs and meal he levies on silly clowns with whom coin is scarce. He vends his own secret medicines, so he keeps away from the doors of the druggists; and for this last week he has taken to sitting in my piazza for two or three hours every day, and making it a resort for asthmas and squalling bambini. It stirs my gall to see the toad-faced quack fingering the greasy quattrini, or bagging a pigeon in exchange for his pills and powders. But I'll put a few thorns in his saddle, else I'm no Florentine. *Laudamus!* he is coming to be shaved; that's what I've waited for. Messer Domenicio, go not away: wait; you shall see a rare

bit of fooling, which I devised two days ago. Here, Sandro!"

Nello whispered in the ear of Sandro, who rolled his solemn eyes, nodded, and, following up these signs of understanding with a slow smile, took to his heels with surprising rapidity.

"How is it with you, Maestro Tacco?" said Nello, as the doctor, with difficulty, brought his horse's head round toward the barber's shop. "That is a fine young horse of yours, but something raw in the mouth, eh?"

"He is an accursed beast, the *vermocene* seize him!" said Maestro Tacco, with a burst of irritation, descending from his saddle and fastening the old bridle, mended with string, to an iron staple in the wall. "Nevertheless," he added, recollecting himself, "a sound beast and a valuable, for one who wanted to purchase, and get a profit by training him. I had him cheap."

"Rather too hard riding for a man who carries your weight of learning: eh, Maestro?" said Nello. "You seem hot."

"Truly, I am likely to be hot," said the doctor, taking off his bonnet, and giving to full view a bald low head and flat broad face, with high ears, wide lipless mouth, round eyes, and deep arched lines above the projecting eyebrows, which altogether made Nello's epithet "toad-faced" dubiously complimentary to the blameless batrachian. "Riding from Peretola, when the sun is high, is not the same thing as kicking your heels on a bench in the shade, like your Florence doctors. Moreover, I have had not a little pulling to get through the carts and mules into the Mercato, to find out the husband of a certain Monna Ghita, who had had a fatal seizure before I was called in; and if it had not been that I had to demand my fees——"

"Monna Ghita!" said Nello, as the perspiring doctor interrupted himself to rub his head and face. "Peace be with her angry soul! The Mercato will want a whip the more if her tongue is laid to rest."

Tito, who had roused himself from his abstraction, and was listening to the dialogue, felt a new rush of the vague half-formed ideas about Tessa, which had passed through his mind the evening before: if Monna Ghita were really taken out of the way, it would be easier for him to see Tessa again—whenever he wanted to see her.

"*Gnaffé*, Maestro," Nello went on, in a sympathising tone, "you are the slave of rude mortals, who, but for

you, would die like brutes, without help of pill or powder. It is pitiful to see your learned lymph oozing from your pores as if it were mere vulgar moisture. You think my shaving will cool and disencumber you? One moment and I have done with Messer Francesco here. It seems to me a thousand years till I wait upon a man who carries all the science of Arabia in his head and saddle-bags. Ecco!"

Nello held up the shaving-cloth with an air of invitation, and Maestro Tacco advanced and seated himself under a preoccupation with his heat and his self-importance, which made him quite deaf to the irony conveyed in Nello's officiously polite speech.

"It is but fitting that a great medicus like you," said Nello, adjusting the cloth, "should be shaved by the same razor that has shaved the illustrious Antonio Benevieni, the greatest master of the chirurgic art."

"The chirurgic art!" interrupted the doctor, with an air of contemptuous disgust. "Is it your Florentine fashion to put the masters of the science of medicine on a level with men who do carpentry on broken limbs, and sew up wounds like tailors, and carve away excrescences as a butcher trims meat? *Via!* A manual art, such as any artificer might learn, and which has been practised by simple barbers like yourself—on a level with the noble science of Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna, which penetrates into the occult influences of the stars and plants and gems!—a science locked up from the vulgar!"

"No, in truth, Maestro," said Nello, using his lather very deliberately, as if he wanted to prolong the operation to the utmost, "I never thought of placing them on a level: I know your science comes next to the miracles of Holy Church for mystery. But there, you see, is the pity of it"—here Nello fell into a tone of regretful sympathy—"your high science is sealed from the profane and the vulgar, and so you become an object of envy and slander. I grieve to say it, but there are low fellows in this city—mere *sgherri*, who go about in nightcaps and long beards, and make it their business to sprinkle gall in every man's broth who is prospering. Let me tell you—for you are a stranger—this is a city where every man had need carry a large nail ready to fasten on the wheel of Fortune when his side happens to be uppermost. Already there are stories—mere fables, doubtless,—beginning to be buzzed about concerning you, that make me wish I

could hear of your being well on your way to Arezzo. I would not have a man of your metal stoned, for though San Stefano was stoned, he was not great in medicine like San Cosmo and San Damiano."

"What stories? what fables?" stammered Maestro Tacco. "What do you mean?"

"*Lasso!* I fear me you are come into the trap for your cheese, Maestro. The fact is, there is a company of evil youths who go prowling about the houses of our citizens carrying sharp tools in their pockets;—no sort of door, or window, or shutter, but they will pierce it. They are possessed with a diabolical patience to watch the doings of people who fancy themselves private. It must be they who have done it—it must be they who have spread the stories about you and your medicines. Have you by chance detected any small aperture in your door, or window-shutter? No? Well, I advise you to look; for it is now commonly talked of that you have been seen in your dwelling at the Canto di Paglia, making your secret specifics by night: pounding dried toads in a mortar, compounding a salve out of mashed worms, and making your pills from the dried livers of rats which you mix with saliva emitted during the utterance of a blasphemous incantation—which indeed these witnesses profess to repeat."

"It is a pack of lies!" exclaimed the doctor, struggling to get utterance, and then desisting in alarm at the approaching razor.

"It is not to me, or any of this respectable company, that you need say that, doctor. *We* are not the heads to plant such carrots as those in. But what of that? What are a handful of reasonable men against a crowd with stones in their hands? There are those among us who think Cecco d'Ascoli was an innocent sage—and we all know how he was burnt alive for being wiser than his fellows. Ah, doctor, it is not by living at Padua that you can learn to know Florentines. My belief is, they would stone the Holy Father himself, if they could find a good excuse for it; and they are persuaded that you are a necromancer, who is trying to raise the pestilence by selling secret medicines—and I am told your specifics have in truth an evil smell."

"It is false!" burst out the doctor, as Nello moved away his razor; "it is false! I will show the pills and the powders to these honorable signori—and the salve—it has

an excellent odor—an odor of—of salve.” He started up with the lather on his chin, and the cloth round his neck, to search in his saddle-bag for the belied medicines, and Nello in an instant adroitly shifted the shaving-chair till it was in the close vicinity of the horse’s head, while Sandro, who had now returned, at a sign from his master placed himself near the bridle.

“Behold, Wesseri!” said the doctor, bringing a small box of medicines and opening it before them. “Let any signor apply this box to his nostrils and he will find an honest odor of medicaments—not indeed of pounded gems or rare vegetables from the East, or stones found in the bodies of birds; for I practice on the diseases of the vulgar, for whom heaven has provided cheaper and less powerful remedies according to their degree: and there are even remedies known to our science which are entirely free of cost—as the new *tussis* may be counteracted in the poor, who can pay for no specifics, by a resolute holding of the breath. And here is a paste which is even of savory odor, and is infallible against melancholia, being concocted under the conjunction of Jupiter and Venus; and I have seen it allay spasms.”

“Stay, Maestro,” said Nello, while the doctor had his lathered face turned towards the group near the door, eagerly holding out his box, and lifting out one specific after another, “here comes a crying contadina with her baby. Doubtless she is in search of you; it is perhaps an opportunity for you to show this honorable company a proof of your skill. Here, *buonna donna*! here is the famous doctor. Why, what is the matter with the sweet *bimbo*?”

This question was addressed to a sturdy-looking, broad-shouldered contadina, with her head-drapery folded about her face, so that little was to be seen but a bronzed nose and a pair of dark eyes and eyebrows. She carried her child packed up in the stiff mummy-shaped case in which Italian babies have been from time immemorial introduced into society, turning its face a little toward her bosom, and making those sorrowful grimaces which women are in the habit of using as a sort of pulleys to draw down reluctant tears.

“Oh, for the love of the Holy Madonna!” said the woman, in a wailing voice, “will you look at my poor *bimbo*? I know I can’t pay for it, but I took it into the Nunziata last night, and it’s turned a worse color than

before; it's the convulsions. But when I was holding it before the Santissima Nunziata, I remembered they said there was a new doctor come who cured everything; and so I thought it might be the will of the Holy Madonna that I should bring it to you."

"Sit down, Maestro, sit down," said Nello. "Here is an opportunity for you; here are honorable witnesses who will declare before the Magnificent Eight that they have seen you practising honestly and relieving a poor woman's child. And then if your life is in danger, the Magnificent Eight will put you in prison a little while just to insure your safety, and after that their sbirri will conduct you out of Florence by night, as they did the zealous Frate Minore, who preached against the Jews. What! our people are given to stone-throwing; but we have magistrates."

The doctor, unable to refuse, seated himself in the shaving-chair, trembling, half with fear and half with rage, and by this time quite unconscious of the lather which Nello had laid on with such profuseness. He deposited his medicine-case on his knees, took out his precious spectacles (wondrous Florentine device!) from his wallet, lodged them carefully above his flat nose and high ears, and lifting up his brows, turned toward the applicant.

"O Santiddio! look at him," said the woman, with a more piteous wail than ever, as she held out the small mummy, which had its head completely concealed by dingy drapery wound round the head of the portable cradle, but seemed to be struggling and crying in a demoniacal fashion under this imprisonment. "The fit is on him! *Ohimè!* I know what color he is; it's the evil eye—oh!"

The doctor, anxiously holding his knees together to support his box, bent his spectacles toward the baby, and said cautiously, "It may be a new disease; unwind these rags, Monna!"

The contadina, with sudden energy, snatched off the encircling linen, when out struggled—scratching, grinning, and screaming—what the doctor in his fright fully believed to be a demon, but what Tito recognized as Vaiano's monkey, made more formidable by an artificial blackness, such as might have come from a hasty rubbing up the chimney.

Up started the unfortunate doctor, letting his medicine-box fall, and away jumped the no less terrified and indignant monkey, finding the first resting-place for his claws

on the horse's mane, which he used as a sort of rope-ladder till he had fairly found his equilibrium, when he continued to clutch it as a bridle. The horse wanted no spur under such a rider, and, the already loosened bridle offering no resistance, darted off across the piazza, with the monkey, clutching, grinning, and blinking, on his neck.

"*Il cavallo! Il Diavolo!*" was now shouted on all sides by the idle rascals who gathered from all quarters of the piazza, and was echoed in tones of alarm by the stall-keepers, whose vested interests seemed in some danger; while the doctor, out of his wits with confused terror at the Devil, the possible stoning, and the escape of the horse, took to his heels with spectacles on nose, lathered face, and the shaving-cloth about his neck, crying—"Stop him! stop him! for a powder—a florin—stop him for a florin!" while the lads, outstripping him, clapped their hands and shouted encouragement to the runaway.

The *cerretano*, who had not bargained for the flight of his monkey along with the horse, had caught up his petticoats with much celerity, and showed a pair of parti-colored hose above his *contadina's* shoes, far in advance of the doctor. And away went the grotesque race up the Corso degli Adimari—the horse with the singular jockey, the *contadina* with the remarkable hose, and the doctor in lather and spectacles, with furred mantle flying.

It was a scene such as Florentines loved, from the potent and reverend signor going to council in his *lucco*, down to the grinning youngster, who felt himself master of all situations when his bag was filled with smooth stones from the convenient dry bed of the torrent. The grey-headed Domenico Cennini laughed no less heartily than the younger men, and Nello was triumphantly secure of the general admiration.

"Aha!" he exclaimed, snapping his fingers when the first burst of laughter was subsiding. "I have cleared my piazza of that unsavory fly-trap, *mi pare*. Maestro Tacco will no more come here again to sit for patients than he will take to licking marble for his dinner."

"You are going toward the Piazza della Signoria, Messer Domenico," said Macchiavelli. "I will go with you, and we shall perhaps see who has deserved the *palio* among these racers. Come, Melema, will you go too?"

It had been precisely Tito's intention to accompany Cennini, but before he had gone many steps, he was called back by Nello, who saw Maso approaching.

Maso's message was from Romola. She wished Tito to go to the Via de Bardi as soon as possible. She would see him under the loggia, at the top of the house, as she wished to speak to him alone.

CHAPTER XVII.

UNDER THE LOGGIA.

THE loggia at the top of Bardo's house rose above the buildings on each side of it, and formed a gallery round quadrangular walls. On the side toward the street the roof was supported by columns; but on the remaining sides, by a wall pierced with arched openings, so that at the back, looking over a crowd of irregular, poorly-built dwellings toward the hill of Bogoli, Romola could at all times have a walk sheltered from observation. Near one of those arched openings, close to the door by which he had entered the loggia, Tito awaited her, with a sickening sense of the sunlight that slanted before him and mingled itself with the ruin of his hopes. He had never for a moment relied on Romola's passion for him as likely to be too strong for the repulsion created by the discovery of his secret; he had not the presumptuous vanity which might have hindered him from feeling that her love had the same root with her belief in him. But as he imagined her coming toward him in her radiant beauty, made so loveably mortal by her soft hazel eyes, he fell into wishing that she had been something lower, if it were only that she might let him clasp her and kiss her before they parted. He had had no real caress from her—nothing but now and then a long glance, a kiss, a pressure of the hand; and he had so often longed that they should be alone together. They were going to be alone now; but he saw her standing inexorably aloof from him. His heart gave a great throb as he saw the door move: Romola was there. It was all like a flash of lightning: he felt, rather than saw, the glory about her head, the tearful appealing eyes; he felt, rather than heard, the cry of love with which she said, "Tito!"

And in the same moment she was in his arms, and sobbing with her face against his.

How poor Romola had yearned through the watches of the night to see that bright face! The new image of death; the strange bewildering doubt infused into her by the story of a life removed from her understanding and sympathy; the haunting vision, which she seemed not only to hear uttered by the low gasping voice, but to live through, as if it had been her own dream, had made her more conscious than ever that it was Tito who had first brought the warm stream of hope and gladness into her life, and who had first turned away the keen edge of pain in the remembrance of her brother. She would tell Tito everything; there was no one else to whom she could tell it. She had been restraining herself in the presence of her father all the morning; but now, that long-pent-up sob might come forth. Proud and self-controlled to all the world beside, Romola was as simple and unreserved as a child in her love for Tito. She had been quite contented with the days when they had only looked at each other; but now, when she felt the need of clinging to him, there was no thought that hindered her.

"My Romola! my goddess!" Tito murmured with passionate fondness, as he clasped her gently, and kissed the thick golden ripples on her neck. He was in paradise: disgrace, shame, parting—there was no fear of them any longer. This happiness was too strong to be marred by the sense that Romola was deceived in him; nay, he could only rejoice in her delusion; for, after all, concealment had been wisdom. The only thing he could regret was his needless dread; if, indeed, the dread had not been worth suffering for the sake of this sudden rapture.

The sob had satisfied itself, and Romola raised her head. Neither of them spoke; they stood looking at each other's faces with that sweet wonder which belongs to young love—she with her long white hands on the dark-brown curls, and he with his dark fingers bathed in the streaming gold. Each was so beautiful to the other; each was experiencing that undisturbed mutual consciousness for the first time. The cold pressure of a new sadness on Romola's heart made her linger the more in that silent soothing sense of nearness and love; and Tito could not even seek to press his lips to hers, because that would be change.

"Tito," she said at last, "it has been altogether painful, but I must tell you everything. Your strength will help

me to resist the impressions that will not be shaken off by reason."

"I know, Romola—I know he is dead," said Tito; and the long lustrous eyes told nothing of the many wishes that would have brought about that death long ago if there had been such potency in mere wishes. Romola only read her own pure thoughts in their dark depths, as we read letters in happy dreams.

"So changed, Tito! It pierced me to think that it was Dino. And so strangely hard: not a word to my father; nothing but a vision that he wanted to tell me. And yet it was so piteous—the struggling breath, and the eyes that seemed to look toward the crucifix, and yet not to see it. I shall never forget it; it seems as if it would come between me and everything I shall look at."

Romola's heart swelled again, so that she was forced to break off. But the need she felt to disburden her mind to Tito urged her to repress the rising anguish. When she began to speak again, her thoughts had traveled a little.

"It was strange, Tito. The vision was about our marriage, and yet he knew nothing of you."

"What was it, my Romola? Sit down and tell me," said Tito, leading her to the bench that stood near. A fear had come across him lest the vision should somehow or other relate to Baldassarre; and this sudden change of feeling prompted him to seek a change of position.

Romola told him all that had passed, from her entrance into San Marco, hardly leaving out one of her brother's words, which had burned themselves into her memory as they were spoken. But when she was at the end of the vision, she paused; the rest came too vividly before her to be uttered, and she sat looking at the distance, almost unconscious for the moment that Tito was near her. *His* mind was at ease now; that vague vision had passed over him like white mist, and left no mark. But he was silent, expecting her to speak again.

"I took it," she went on, as if Tito had been reading her thoughts; "I took the crucifix; it is down below in my bedroom."

"And now, my Romola," said Tito, entreatingly, "you will banish these ghastly thoughts. The vision was an ordinary monkish vision, bred of fasting and fanatical ideas. It surely has no weight with you."

"No, Tito, no. But poor Dino, *he* believed it was a divine message. It is strange," she went on, meditatively,

"this life of men possessed with fervid beliefs that seem like madness to their fellow-beings. Dino was not a vulgar fanatic; and that Fra Girolamo—his very voice seems to have penetrated me with a sense that there is some truth in what moves them: some truth of which I know nothing."

"It was only because your feelings were highly wrought, my Romola. Your brother's state of mind was no more than a form of that theosophy which has been the common disease of excitable, dreamy minds in all ages; the same ideas that your father's old antagonist, Marsilio Ficino, pores over in the New Platonists; only your brother's passionate nature drove him to act out what other men write and talk about. And for Fra Girolamo, he is simply a narrow-minded monk, with a gift of preaching and infusing terror into the multitude. Any words or any voice would have shaken you at that moment. When your mind has had a little repose, you will judge of such things as you have always done before."

"Not about poor Dino," said Romola. "I was angry with him; my heart seemed to close against him while he was speaking; but since then I have thought less of what was in my own mind and more of what was in his. Oh, Tito! it was very piteous to see his young life coming to an end in that way. That yearning look at the crucifix when he was gasping for breath—I can never forget it. Last night I looked at the crucifix a long while, and tried to see that it would help him, until at last it seemed to me by the lamplight as if the suffering face shed pity."

"My Romola, promise me to resist such thoughts; they are fit for sickly nuns, not for my golden-tressed Aurora, who looks made to scatter all such twilight fantasies. Try not to think of them now; we shall not long be alone together."

The last words were uttered in a tone of tender beseeching, and he turned her face toward him with a gentle touch of his right hand.

Romola had had her eyes fixed absently on the arched opening, but she had not seen the distant hill; she had all the while been in the chapter-house, looking at the pale images of sorrow and death.

Tito's touch and beseeching voice recalled her; and now in the warm sunlight she saw that rich dark beauty which seemed to gather round it all images of joy—purple vines festooned between the elms, the strong corn perfecting itself under the vibrating heat, bright-winged creatures

hurrying and resting among the flowers, round limbs beating the earth in gladness with cymbals held aloft, light melodies chanted to the thrilling rhythm of strings—all objects and all sounds that tell of Nature reveling in her force. Strange, bewildering transition from those pale images of sorrow and death to this bright youthfulness, as of a sun-god who knew nothing of night! What thought could reconcile that worn anguish in her brother's face—that straining after something invisible—with this satisfied strength and beauty, and make it intelligible that they belonged to the same world? Or was there never any reconciling of them, but only a blind worship of clashing deities, first in mad joy and then in wailing? Romola for the first time felt this questioning need like a sudden uneasy dizziness and want of something to grasp; it was an experience hardly longer than a sigh, for the eager theorising of ages is compressed, as in a seed, in the momentary want of a single mind. But there was no answer to meet the need, and it vanished before the returning rush of young sympathy with the glad, loving beauty that beamed upon her in new radiance, like the dawn after we have looked away from it to the gray west.

"Your mind lingers apart from our love, my Romola," Tito said, with a soft, reproachful murmur. "It seems a forgotten thing to you."

She looked at the beseeching eyes in silence, till the sadness all melted out of her own.

"My joy!" she said, in her full, clear voice.

"Do you really care for me enough, then, to banish those chill fancies, or shall you always be suspecting me as the Great Tempter?" said Tito, with his bright smile.

"How should I not care for you more than for everything else? Everything I had felt before in all my life—about my father, and about my loneliness—was a preparation to love you. You would laugh at me, Tito, if you knew what sort of man I used to think I should marry—some scholar with deep lines in his face, like Alamanno Rinuccini, and with rather gray hair, who would agree with my father in taking the side of the Aristotelians, and be willing to live with him. I used to think about the love I read of in the poets, but I never dreamed that anything like that could happen to me here in Florence in our old library. And then *you* came, Tito, and were so much to my father, and I began to believe that life could be happy for me too."

"My goddess! is there any woman like you?" said Tito, with a mixture of fondness and wondering admiration at the blended majesty and simplicity in her.

"But, dearest," he went on, rather timidly, "if you minded more about our marriage, you would persuade your father and Messer Bernardo not to think of any more delays. But you seem not to mind about it."

"Yes, Tito, I will, I do mind. But I am sure my godfather will urge more delay now, because of Dino's death. He has never agreed with my father about disowning Dino, and you know he has always said that we ought to wait until you have been at least a year in Florence. Do not think hardly of my godfather. I know he is prejudiced and narrow, but yet he is very noble. He has often said that it is folly in my father to want to keep his library apart, that it may bear his name; yet he would try to get my father's wish carried out. That seems to me very great and noble—that power of respecting a feeling which he does not share or understand."

"I have no rancor against Messer Bernardo for thinking you too precious for me, my Romola," said Tito: and that was true. "But your father, then, knows of his son's death?"

"Yes, I told him—I could not help it. I told him where I had been, and that I had seen Dino die; but nothing else; and he has commanded me not to speak of it again. But he has been very silent this morning, and has had those restless movements which always go to my heart; they look as if he were trying to get outside the prison of his blindness. Let us go to him now. I had persuaded him to try to sleep, because he slept little in the night. Your voice will soothe him, Tito: it always does."

"And not one kiss? I have not had one," said Tito, in his gentle reproachful tone, which gave him an air of dependence very charming in a creature with those rare gifts that seem to excuse presumption.

The sweet pink blush spread itself with the quickness of light over Romola's face and neck as she bent toward him. It seemed impossible that their kisses could ever become common things.

"Let us walk once round the loggia," said Romola, "before we go down."

"There is something grim and grave to me always about Florence," said Tito, as they paused in the front of the house, where they could see over the opposite roofs to

the other side of the river," and even in its merriment there is something shrill and hard—biting rather than gay. I wish we lived in Southern Italy, where thought is broken, not by weariness, but by delicious languors such as never seem to come over the 'ingenia acerrima Florentina.' I should like to see you under that southern sun, lying among the flowers, subdued into mere enjoyment, while I bent over you and touched the lute and sang to you some little unconscious strain that seemed all one with the light and the warmth. You have never known that happiness of the nymphs, my Romola."

"No; but I have dreamed of it often since you came. I am very thirsty for a deep draught of joy—for a life all bright like you. But we will not think of it now, Tito; it seems to me as if there would always be pale sad faces among the flowers, and eyes that look in vain. Let us go."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PORTRAIT.

WHEN Tito left the Via de' Bardi that day in exultant satisfaction at finding himself thoroughly free from the threatened peril, his thoughts, no longer claimed by the immediate presence of Romola and her father, recurred to those futile hours of dread in which he was conscious of having not only felt but acted as he would not have done if he had had a truer foresight. He would not have parted with his ring; for Romola, and others to whom it was a familiar object, would be a little struck with the apparent sordidness of parting with a gem he had professedly cherished, unless he feigned as a reason the desire to make some special gift with the purchase-money; and Tito had at that moment a nauseating weariness of simulation. He was well out of the possible consequences that might have fallen on him from that initial deception, and it was no longer a load on his mind; kind fortune had brought him immunity, and he thought it was only fair that she should. Who was hurt by it? The results to Baldassarre were too problematical to be taken into account. But he wanted now to be free from any hidden shackles that would gall him, though ever so little, under his ties

to Romola. He was not aware that every delight in immunity which prompted resolutions not to entangle himself again, was deadening the sensibilities which alone could save him from entanglement.

But, after all, the sale of the ring was a slight matter. Was it also a slight matter that little Tessa was under a delusion which would doubtless fill her small head with expectations doomed to disappointment? Should he try to see the little thing alone again and undeceive her at once, or should he leave the disclosure to time and chance? Happy dreams are pleasant, and they easily come to an end with daylight and the stir of life. The sweet, pouting innocent, round thing! It was impossible not to think of her. Tito thought he should like some time to take her a present that would please her, and just learn if her step-father treated her more cruelly now her mother was dead. Or, should he at once undeceive Tessa, and then tell Romola about her, so that they might find some happier lot for the poor thing? No: that unfortunate little incident of the *cerretano* and the marriage, and his allowing Tessa to part from him in delusion, must never be known to Romola, and since no enlightenment could expel it from Tessa's mind, there would always be a risk of betrayal; besides, even little Tessa might have some gall in her when she found herself disappointed in her love—yes, she *must* be a little in love with him, and that might make it well that he should not see her again. Yet it was a trifling adventure, such as a country girl would perhaps ponder on till some ruddy contadino made acceptable love to her, when she would break her resolution of secrecy and get at the truth that she was free. *Dunque*—good-bye, Tessa! kindest wishes! Tito had made up his mind that the silly little affair of the *cerretano* should have no further consequences for himself; people are apt to think that resolutions taken on their own behalf will be firm. As for the fifty-five florins, the purchase-money of the ring, Tito had made up his mind what to do with some of them; he would carry out a pretty ingenious thought, which would set him more at ease in accounting for the absence of his ring to Romola, and would also serve him as a means of guarding her mind from the recurrence of those monkish fancies which were especially repugnant to him; and with this thought in his mind, he went to the Via Gualfonda to find Piero di Cosimo, the artist who at that time was pre-eminent in the fantastic mythological design which Tito's purpose required.

Entering the court on which Piero's dwelling opened, Tito found the heavy iron knocker on the door thickly bound round with wool, and ingeniously fastened with cords. Remembering the painter's practice of stuffing his ears against obtrusive noises, Tito was not much surprised at this mode of defense against visitors' thunder, and betook himself first to tapping modestly with his knuckles, and then to a more important attempt to shake the door. In vain! Tito was moving away, blaming himself for wasting his time on this visit, instead of waiting till he saw the painter again at Nello's, when a little girl entered the court with a basket of eggs on her arm, went up to the door, and standing on tiptoe, pushed up a small iron plate that ran in grooves, and putting her mouth to the aperture thus disclosed, called out in a piping voice, "Messer Piero!"

In a few moments Tito heard the sound of bolts, the door opened, and Piero presented himself in a red night-cap and a loose brown serge tunic, with sleeves rolled up to the shoulder. He darted a look of surprise at Tito, but without further notice of him stretched out his hand to take the basket from the child, re-entered the house, and presently returning with the empty basket, said, "How much to pay?"

"Two grossoni, Messer Piero; they are all ready boiled, my mother says."

Piero took the coin out of the leathern scarsella at his belt, and the little maiden trotted away, not without a few upward glances of awed admiration at the surprising young signor.

Piero's glance was much less complimentary as he said —

"What do you want at my door, Messer Greco? I saw you this morning at Nello's; if you had asked me then, I could have told you that I see no man in this house without knowing his business and agreeing with him beforehand."

"Pardon, Messer Piero," said Tito with his imperturbable good-humor; "I acted without sufficient reflection. I remembered nothing but your admirable skill in inventing pretty caprices, when a sudden desire for something of that sort prompted me to come to you."

The painter's manners were too notoriously odd to all the world for this reception to be held a special affront; but even if Tito had suspected any offensive intention, the impulse to resentment would have been less strong in him than the desire to conquer goodwill.

Piero made a grimace which was habitual with him when he was spoken to with flattering suavity. He grinned, stretched out the corners of his mouth, and pressed down his brows, so as to defy any divination of his feelings under that kind of stroking.

"And what may that need be?" he said, after a moment's pause. In his heart he was tempted by the hinted opportunity of applying his invention.

"I want very delicate miniature device taken from certain fables of the poets, which you will know how to combine for me. It must be painted on a wooden case — I will show you the size — in the form of a triptych. The inside may be simple gilding: it is on the outside I want the device. It is a favorite subject with you Florentines — the triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne; but I want it treated in a new way. A story in Ovid will give you the necessary hints. The young Bacchus must be seated in a ship, his head bound with clusters of grapes, and a spear entwined with vine-leaves in his hand: dark-berried ivy must wind about the masts and sails, the oars must be thyrsi, and flowers must wreath themselves about the poop; leopards and tigers must be crouching before him, and dolphins must be sporting round. But I want to have the fair-haired Ariadne with him, made immortal with her golden crown — that is not in Ovid's story, but no matter, you will conceive it all — and above there must be young Loves, such as you know how to paint, shooting with roses at the points of their arrows —"

"Say no more!" said Piero. "I have Ovid in the vulgar tongue. Find me the passage. I love not to be choked with other men's thoughts. You may come in."

Piero led the way through the first room, where a basket of eggs was deposited on the open hearth, near a heap of broken egg-shells and a bank of ashes. In strange keeping with that sordid litter, there was a low bedstead of carved ebony, covered carelessly with a piece of rich oriental carpet, that looked as if it had served to cover the steps to a Madonna's throne; and a carved *cassone*, or large chest, with painted devices on its sides and lid. There was hardly any other furniture in the large room, except casts, wooden steps, easels and rough boxes, all festooned with cobwebs.

The next room was still larger, but it was also much more crowded. Apparently Piero was keeping the Festa, for the double door underneath the window which admitted the painter's light from above, was thrown open, and

showed a garden, or rather thicket, in which fig-trees and vines grew in tangled trailing wildness among nettles and hemlocks, and a tall cypress lifted its dark head from a stifling mass of yellowish mulberry-leaves. It seemed as if that dank luxuriance had begun to penetrate even within the walls of the wide and lofty room; for in one corner, amidst a confused heap of carved marble fragments and rusty armor, tufts of long grass and dark feathery fennel had made their way, and a large stone vase, tilted on one side, seemed to be pouring out the ivy that streamed around. All about the walls hung pen and oil sketches of fantastic sea-monsters; dances of satyrs and mænads; Saint Margaret's resurrection out of the devouring dragon; Madonnas with the supernal light upon them; studies of plants and grotesque heads; and on irregular rough shelves a few books were scattered among great drooping bunches of corn, bullocks' horns, pieces of dried honeycomb, stones with patches of rare-colored lichen, skulls and bones, peacocks' feathers, and large birds' wings. Rising from amongst the dirty litter of the floor were lay figures: one in the frock of a Vallombrosan monk, strangely surmounted by a helmet with barred visor, another smothered with brocade and skins hastily tossed over it. Amongst this heterogeneous still life, several speckled and white pigeons were perched or strutting, too tame to fly at the entrance of men; three corpulent toads were crawling in an intimate friendly way near the door-stone; and a white rabbit, apparently the model for that which was frightening Cupid in the picture of Mars and Venus placed on the central easel, was twitching its nose with much content on a box full of bran.

"And now, Messer Greco," said Piero, making a sign to Tito that he might sit down on a low stool near the door, and then standing over him with folded arms, "don't be trying to see everything at once, like Messer Domeneddio, but let me know how large you would have this same triptych."

Tito indicated the required dimensions, and Piero marked them on a piece of paper.

"And now for the book," said Piero, reaching down a manuscript volume.

"There's nothing about the Ariadne there," said Tito, giving him the passage; "but you will remember I want the crowned Ariadne by the side of the young Bacchus: she must have golden hair."

"Ha!" said Piero, abruptly, pushing up his lips again. "And you want them to be likenesses, eh?" he added, looking down into Tito's face.

Tito laughed and blushed. "I know you are great at portraits, Messer Piero; but I could not ask Ariadne to sit for you, because the painting is a secret."

"There it is! I want her to sit to me. Giovanni Vespucci wants me to paint him a picture of *Œdipus* and *Antigone* at *Colonus*, as he has expounded it to me: I have a fancy for the subject, and I want Bardo and his daughter to sit for it. Now, you ask them; and then I'll put the likeness into Ariadne."

"Agreed, if I can prevail with them. And your price for the *Bacchus* and *Ariadne*?"

"*Baie!* If you get them to let me paint them, that will pay me. I'd rather not have your money: you may pay for the case."

"And when shall I sit for you?" said Tito; "for if we have one likeness, we must have two."

"I don't want *your* likeness; I've got it already," said Piero, "only I've made you look frightened. I must take the fright out of it for *Bacchus*."

As he was speaking, Piero laid down the book and went to look among some paintings, propped with their faces against the wall. He returned with an oil-sketch in his hand.

"I call this as good a bit of portrait as I ever did," he said, looking at it as he advanced. "Your's is a face that expresses fear well, because it's naturally a bright one. I noticed it the first time I saw you. The rest of the picture is hardly sketched; but I've painted *you* in thoroughly."

Piero turned the sketch and held it toward Tito's eyes. He saw himself with his right hand uplifted, holding a wine-cup, in the attitude of triumphant joy, but with his face turned away from the cup with an expression of such intense fear in the dilated eyes and pallid lips, that he felt a cold stream through his veins, as if he were being thrown into sympathy with his imaged self.

"You are beginning to look like it already," said Piero, with a short laugh, moving the picture away again. "He's seeing a ghost—that fine young man. I shall finish it some day, when I've settled what sort of ghost is the most terrible—whether it should look solid, like a dead man come to life, or half transparent, like a mist."

Tito rather ashamed of himself for a sudden sensitiveness strangely opposed to his usual easy self-command, said carelessly—

“That is a subject after your own heart, Messer Piero—a revel interrupted by a ghost. You seem to love the blending of the terrible with the gay. I suppose that is the reason your shelves are so well furnished with death’s-heads, while you are painting those roguish Loves who are running away with the armor of Mars. I begin to think you are a Cynic philosopher in the pleasant disguise of a cunning painter.”

“Not I, Messer Greco; a philosopher is the last sort of animal I should choose to resemble. I find it enough to live, without spinning lies to account for life. Fowls cackle, asses bray, women chatter, and philosophers spin false reasons—that’s the effect the sight of the world brings out of them. Well, I am an animal that paints instead of cackling, or braying, or spinning lies. And now, I think, our business is done; you’ll keep to your side of the bargain about the *Cædipus* and *Antigone*?”

“I will do my best,” said Tito—on this strong hint, immediately moving toward the door.

“And you’ll let me know at Nello’s. No need to come here again.”

“I understand,” said Tito, laughingly, lifting his hand in sign of friendly parting.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE OLD MAN’S HOPE.

MESSER BERNARDO DEL NERO was as inexorable as Romola had expected in his advice that the marriage should be deferred till Easter, and in this matter Bardo was entirely under the ascendancy of his sagacious and practical friend. Nevertheless, Bernardo himself, though he was as far as ever from any susceptibility to the personal fascination in Tito which was felt by others, could not altogether resist that argument of success which is always powerful with men of the world. Tito was making his way rapidly in high quarters. He was especially growing in favor with the young Cardinal

Giovanni de' Medici, who had even spoken of Tito's forming part of his learned retinue on an approaching journey to Rome; and the bright young Greek who had a tongue that was always ready without ever being quarrelsome, was more and more wished for at gay suppers in the Via Larga, and at Florentine games in which he had no pretension to excel, and could admire the incomparable skill of Piero de' Medici in the most graceful manner in the world. By an unfailing sequence, Tito's reputation as an agreeable companion in "magnificent" society made his learning and talent appear more lustrous: and he was really accomplished enough to prevent an exaggerated estimate from being hazardous to him. Messer Bernardo had old prejudices and attachments which now began to argue down the newer and feebler prejudice against the young Greek stranger who was rather too supple. To the old Florentine it was impossible to despise the recommendation of standing well with the best Florentine families, and since Tito began to be thoroughly received into that circle whose views were the unquestioned standard of social value, it seemed irrational not to admit that there was no longer any check to satisfaction in the prospect of such a son-in-law for Bardo, and such a husband for Romola. It was undeniable that Tito's coming had been the dawn of a new life for both father and daughter, and the first promise had even been surpassed. The blind old scholar—whose proud truthfulness would never enter into that commerce of feigned and preposterous admiration which, varied by a corresponding measurelessness in vituperation, made the woof of all learned intercourse—had fallen into neglect even among his fellow-citizens, and when he was alluded to at all, it had long been usual to say that, though his blindness and the loss of his son were pitiable misfortunes, he was tiresome in contending for the value of his own labors; and that his discontent was a little inconsistent in a man who had been openly regardless of religious rites, and who in days past had refused offers made to him from various quarters, on the slight condition that he would take orders, without which it was not easy for patrons to provide for every scholar. But since Tito's coming, there was no longer the same monotony in the thought that Bardo's name suggested; the old man, it was understood, had left off his complaints, and the fair daughter was no longer to be shut up in dowerless pride, waiting for a *parentado*. The winning manners and growing favor of

the handsome Greek who was expected to enter into the double relation of son and husband helped to make the new interest a thoroughly friendly one, and it was no longer a rare occurrence when a visitor enlivened the quiet library. Elderly men came from that indefinite prompting to renew former intercourse which arises when an old acquaintance begins to be newly talked about; and young men whom Tito had asked leave to bring once, found it easy to go again when they overtook him on his way to the Via de Bardi, and resting their hands on his shoulder, fell into easy chat with him. For it was pleasant to look at Romola's beauty; to see her, like old Firenzuola's type of womanly majesty, "sitting with a certain grandeur, speaking with gravity, smiling with modesty, and casting around, as it were, an odor of queenliness;"* and she seemed to unfold like a strong white lily under this genial breath of admiration and homage; it was all one to her with her new bright life in Tito's love.

Tito had even been the means of strengthening the hope in Bardo's mind that he might before his death receive the longed-for security concerning his library: that it should not be merged in another collection; that it should not be transferred to a body of monks, and be called by the name of a monastery; but that it should remain forever the Bardi Library, for the use of Florentines. For the old habit of trusting in the Medici could not die out while their influence was still the strongest lever in the State; and Tito, once possessing the ear of the Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, might do more even than Messer Bernardo toward winning the desired interest, for he could demonstrate to a learned audience the peculiar value of Bardi's collection. Tito himself talked sanguinely of such a result, willing to cheer the old man, and conscious that Romola repaid those gentle words to her father with a sort of adoration that no direct tribute to herself could have won from her.

This question of the library was the subject of more than one discussion with Bernardo del Nero when Christmas was turned and the prospect of the marriage was becoming near — but always out of Bardo's hearing. For Bardo nursed a vague belief, which they dared not disturb, that his property, apart from the library, was adequate to

* "Quando una donna è grande, ben formata, porta ben sua persona, siede con una certa grandezza, parla con gravità, ride con modestia, e finalmente getta quasi un odor di Regina; allora noi diciamo quella donna pare una maestà, ella ha una maestà."—FIRENZUOLA: *Dolla Bellezza delle Donne*.

meet all demands. He would not even, except under a momentary pressure of angry despondency, admit to himself that the will by which he had disinherited Dino would leave Romola the heir of nothing but debts; or that he needed anything from patronage beyond the security that a separate locality should be assigned to his library, in return for a deed of gift by which he made it over to the Florentine Republic.

"My opinion is," said Bernardo to Romola, in a consultation they had under the loggia, "that since you are to be married, and Messer Tito will have a competent income, we should begin to wind up the affairs, and ascertain exactly the sum that would be necessary to save the library from being touched, instead of letting the debts accumulate any longer. Your father needs nothing but his shred of mutton and his macaroni every day, and I think Messer Tito may engage to supply that for the years that remain; he can let it be in place of the *morgen-cap*."

"Tito has always known that my life is bound up with my father's," said Romola; "and he is better to my father than I am: he delights in making him happy."

"Ah, he's not made of the same clay as other men, is he?" said Bernardo, smiling. "Thy father has thought of shutting woman's folly out of thee by cramming thee with Greek and Latin; but thou hast been as ready to believe in the first pair of bright eyes and the first soft words that have come within reach of thee, as if thou couldst say nothing by heart but Paternosters, like other Christian men's daughters."

"Now, Godfather," said Romola, shaking her head playfully, "as if it were only bright eyes and soft words that made me love Tito! You know better. You know I love my father and you because you are both good, and I love Tito too because he is so good. I see it, I feel it, in everything he says and does. And if he is handsome, too, why should I not love him the better for that? It seems to me beauty is part of the finished language by which goodness speaks. You know *you* must have been a very handsome youth, godfather"—she looked up with one of her happy, loving smiles at the stately old man—"you were about as tall as Tito, and you had very fine eyes; only you looked a little sterner and prouder, and —"

"And Romola likes to have all the pride to herself?" said Bernardo, not inaccessible to this pretty coaxing.

"However, it is well that in one way Tito's demands are more modest than those of any Florentine husband of fitting rank that we should have been likely to find for you; he wants no dowry."

So it was settled in that way between Messer Bernardo del Nero, Romola, and Tito. Bardo assented with a wave of the hand when Bernardo told him that he thought it would be well now to begin to sell property and clear off debts; being accustomed to think of debts and property as a sort of thick wood that his imagination never even penetrated, still less got beyond. And Tito set about winning Messer Bernardo's respect by inquiring, with his ready faculty, into Florentine money-matters, the secrets of the *Monti* or public funds, the values of real property, and the profits of banking.

"You will soon forget that Tito is not a Florentine, godfather," said Romola. "See how he is learning everything about Florence."

"It seems to me he is one of the *demoni*, who are of no particular country, child," said Bernardo, smiling. "His mind is a little too nimble to be weighted with all the stuff we men carry about in our hearts."

Romola smiled too in happy confidence.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DAY OF THE BETROTHAL.

It was the last week of the Carnival, and the streets of Florence were at their fullest and noisiest: there were the masked processions, chanting songs, indispensable now they had once been introduced by Lorenzo the Magnificent; there was the favorite rigoletto, or round dance, footed "in piazza" under the blue frosty sky; there were practical jokes of all sorts, from throwing comfits to throwing stones—especially stones. For the boys and striplings, always a strong element in Florentine crowds, became at the height of Carnival time as loud and unmanageable as tree-crickets, and it was their immemorial privilege to bar the way with poles to all passengers, until a tribute had been paid toward furnishing those lovers of strong sensations with suppers and bonfires: to conclude with the

standing entertainment of stone-throwing, which was not entirely monotonous, since the consequent maiming was various, and it was not always a single person who was killed. So that the pleasures of the Carnival were of a checkered kind, and if a painter were called upon to represent them truly, he would have to make a picture in which there would be so much grossness and barbarity that it must be turned with its face to the wall, except when it was taken down for the grave historical purpose of justifying a reforming zeal which, in ignorance of the facts, might be unfairly condemned for its narrowness. Still there was much of that more innocent picturesque merriment which is never wanting among a people with quick animal spirits and sensitive organs: there was not the heavy sottishness which belongs to the thicker northern blood, nor the stealthy fierceness which, in the more southern regions of the peninsula, makes the brawl lead to the dagger-thrust.

It was the high morning, but the merry spirits of the Carnival were still inclined to lounge and recapitulate the last night's jests, when Tito Melema was walking at a brisk pace on the way to the Via de Bardi. Young Bernardo Doviz, who now looks at us out of Raphael's portrait as the keen-eyed Cardinal da Bibbiena, was with him; and, as they went, they held animated talk about some subject that had evidently no relation to the sights and sounds through which they were pushing their way along the Por Santa Maria. Nevertheless, as they discussed, smiled, and gesticulated, they both, from time to time, cast quick glances around them, and at the turning toward the Lung Arno, leading to the Ponte Rubaconte, Tito had become aware, in one of these rapid surveys, that there was some one not far off him by whom he very much desired not to be recognized at that moment. His time and thoughts were thoroughly preoccupied, for he was looking forward to a unique occasion in his life: he was preparing for his betrothal, which was to take place on the evening of this very day. The ceremony had been resolved upon rather suddenly; for although preparations toward the marriage had been going forward for some time—chiefly in the application of Tito's florins to the fitting up of rooms in Bardo's dwelling, which, the library excepted, had always been scantily furnished—it had been intended to defer both the betrothal and the marriage until after Easter, when Tito's year of probation, insisted on by Bernardo del Nero, would have been complete. But when an express

proposition had come, that Tito should follow the Cardinal Giovanni to Rome to help Bernardo Dovizi with his superior knowledge of Greek in arranging a library, and there was no possibility of declining what lay so plainly on the road to advancement, he had become urgent in his entreaties that the betrothal might take place before his departure: there would be the less delay before the marriage on his return, and it would be less painful to part if he and Romola were outwardly as well as inwardly pledged to each other—if he had a claim which defied Messer Bernardo or any one else to nullify it. For the betrothal, at which rings were exchanged and mutual contracts were signed, made more than half the legality of the marriage, to be completed on a separate occasion by the nuptial benediction. Romola's feelings had met Tito's in this wish, and the consent of the elders had been won.

And now Tito was hastening, amidst arrangements for his departure the next day, to snatch a morning visit to Romola, to say and hear any last words that are needful to be said before their meeting for the betrothal in the evening. It was not a time when any recognition could be pleasant that was at all likely to detain him; still less a recognition by Tessa. And it was unmistakably Tessa whom he had caught sight of, moving along with a timid and forlorn look, toward that very turn of the Lung Arno which he was just rounding. As he continued his talk with the young Dovizi, he had an uncomfortable undercurrent of consciousness which told him that Tessa had seen him and would certainly follow him: there was no escaping her along this direct road by the Arno, and over the Ponte Rubaconte. But she would not dare to speak to him or approach him while he was not alone, and he would continue to keep Dovizi with him till they reached Bardo's door. He quickened his pace, and took up new threads of talk, but all the while the sense that Tessa was behind him, though he had no physical evidence of the fact, grew stronger and stronger; it was very irritating—perhaps all the more so because a certain tenderness and pity for the poor little thing made the determination to escape without any visible notice of her, a not altogether agreeable resource. Yet Tito persevered and carried his companion to the door, cleverly managing his “addio” without turning his face in the direction where it was possible for him to see an importunate pair of blue eyes; and as he went up the stone steps, he tried to get rid of

unpleasant thoughts by saying to himself that after all Tessa might not have seen him, or, if she had, might not have followed him.

But—perhaps because that possibility could not be relied on strongly—when the visit was over, he came out of the doorway with a quick step and an air of unconsciousness as to anything that might be on his right hand or his left. Our eyes are so constructed, however, that they take in a wide angle without asking any leave of our will; and Tito knew that there was a little figure in a white hood standing near the doorway—knew it quite well, before he felt a hand laid on his arm. It was a real grasp, and not a light, timid touch; for poor Tessa, seeing his rapid step, had started forward with a desperate effort. But when he stopped and turned toward her, her face wore a frightened look, as if she dreaded the effect of her boldness.

“Tessa!” said Tito, with more sharpness in his voice than she had ever heard in it before. “Why are you here? You must not follow me—you must not stand about door-places waiting for me.”

Her blue eyes widened with tears, and she said nothing. Tito was afraid of something worse than ridicule, if he were seen in the Via de Bardi with a girlish contadina looking pathetically at him. It was a street of high, silent-looking dwellings, not of traffic; but Bernardo del Nero, or some one almost as dangerous, might come up at any moment. Even if it had not been the day of his betrothal, the incident would have been awkward and annoying. Yet it would be brutal—it was impossible to drive Tessa away with harsh words. That accursed folly of his with the *cerretano*—that it should have lain buried in a quiet way for months, and now start up before him as this unseasonable crop of vexation! He could not speak harshly, but he spoke hurriedly.

“Tessa, I cannot—must not talk to you here. I will go on to the bridge and wait for you there. Follow me slowly.”

He turned and walked fast to the Ponte Rubaconte, and there leaned against the wall of one of the quaint little houses that rise at even distances on the bridge, looking toward the way by which Tessa would come. It would have softened a much harder heart than Tito’s to see the little thing advancing with her round face much paled and saddened since he had parted from it at the door of the “Nunziata.” Happily it was the least frequented of the

bridges, and there were scarcely any passengers on it at this moment. He lost no time in speaking as soon as she came near him.

"Now, Tessa, I have very little time. You must not cry. Why did you follow me this morning? You must not do so again."

"I thought," said Tessa, speaking in a whisper, and struggling against a sob that *would* rise immediately at this new voice of Tito's—I thought you wouldn't be so long before you came to take care of me again. And the *patrigno* beats me, and I can't bear it any longer. And always when I come for a holiday I walk about to find you, and I can't. Oh, please don't send me away from you again! It has been so long, and I cry so now, because you never come to me. I can't help it, for the days are so long, and I don't mind about the goats and kids, or anything—and I can't——"

The sobs came fast now, and the great tears. Tito felt that he could not do otherwise than comfort her. Send her away—yes; that he *must* do, at once. But it was all the more impossible to tell her anything that would leave her in a state of hopeless grief. He saw new trouble in the background, but the difficulty of the moment was too pressing for him to weigh distant consequences.

"Tessa, my little one," he said, in his old caressing tones, "you must not cry. Bear with the cross *patrigno* a little longer. I will come back to you. But I'm going now to Rome—a long, long way off. I shall come back in a few weeks, and then I promise you to come and see you. Promise me to be good and wait for me."

It was the well-remembered voice again, and the mere sound was half enough to soothe Tessa. She looked up at him with trusting eyes, that still glittered with tears, sobbing all the while, in spite of her utmost efforts to obey him. Again he said in a gentle voice—

"Promise me, my Tessa."

"Yes," she whispered. "But you won't be long?"

"No, not long. But I must go now. And remember what I told you, Tessa. Nobody must know that you ever see me, else you will lose me forever. And now, when I have left you, go straight home, and never follow me again. Wait till I come to you. Good-bye, my little Tessa: I *will* come."

There was no help for it; he must turn and leave her without looking behind him to see how she bore it, for

he had no time to spare. When he did look around he was in the Via de Benci, where there was no seeing what was happening on the bridge; but Tessa was too trusting and obedient not to do just what he had told her.

Yes, the difficulty was at an end for that day; yet this return of Tessa to him, at a moment when it was impossible for him to put an end to all difficulty with her by undeceiving her, was an unpleasant incident to carry in his memory. But Tito's mind was just now thoroughly penetrated with a hopeful first love, associated with all happy prospects flattering to his ambition; and that future necessity of grieving Tessa could be scarcely more to him than the far-off cry of some little suffering animal buried in the thicket, to a merry cavalcade in the sunny plain. When, for the second time that day, Tito was hastening across the Ponte Rubaconte, the thought of Tessa caused no perceptible diminution of his happiness. He was well muffled in his mantle, less, perhaps to protect him from the cold than from the additional notice that would have been drawn upon him by his dainty apparel. He leaped up the stone steps by two at a time, and said hurriedly to Maso, who met him—

“Where is the damigella?”

“In the library; she is quite ready, and Monna Brigada and Messer Bernardo are already there with Ser Braccio, but none of the rest of the company.”

“Ask her to give me a few minutes alone; I will await her in the *salotto*.”

Tito entered a room which had been fitted up in the utmost contrast with the half-pallid, half-sombre tints of the library. The walls were brightly frescoed with “caprices” of nymphs and loves sporting under the blue among flowers and birds. The only furniture besides the red leather seats and the central table were two tall white vases, and a young faun playing the flute, modelled by a promising youth named Michelangelo Buonarotti. It was a room that gave a sense of being in the sunny open air.

Tito kept his mantle round him, and looked toward the door. It was not long before Romola entered, all white in gold, more than ever like a tall lily. Her white silk garment was bound by a golden girdle, which fell with large tassels; and above that was the rippling gold of her hair, surmounted by the white mist of her long veil, which was fastened on her brow by a band of pearls, the gift of

Bernardo del Nero, and was now parted off her face so that it all floated backward.

"Regina mia!" said Tito, as he took her hand and kissed it, still keeping his mantle round him. He could not help going backward to look at her again, while she stood in calm delight, with that exquisite self-consciousness which rises under the gaze of admiring love.

"Romola, will you show me the next room now?" said Tito, checking himself with the remembrance that the time might be short. "You said I should see it when you had arranged everything."

Without speaking, she led the way into a long narrow room, painted brightly like the other, but only with birds and flowers. The furniture in it was all old; there were old faded objects for feminine use or ornament, arranged in an open cabinet between the two narrow windows; above the cabinet was the portrait of Romola's mother; and below this, on the top of the cabinet, stood the crucifix which Romola had brought from San Marco.

"I have brought something under my mantle," said Tito, smiling; and throwing off the large loose garment, he showed the little tabernacle which had been painted by Piero di Cosimo. The painter had carried out Tito's intention charmingly, and so far had atoned for his long delay. "Do you know what this is for, my Romola?" added Tito, taking her by the hand, and leading her toward the cabinet. "It is a little shrine, which is to hide away from you forever that remembrancer of sadness. You have done with sadness now; and we will bury all images of it—bury them in a tomb of joy. See!"

A slight quiver passed across Romola's face as Tito took hold of the crucifix. But she had no wish to prevent his purpose; on the contrary, she herself wished to subdue certain importunate memories and questionings which still flitted like unexplained shadows across her happier thought.

He opened the triptych and placed the crucifix within the central space; then closing it again, taking out the key, and setting the little tabernacle in the spot where the crucifix had stood, said—

"Now, Romola, look and see if you are satisfied with the portraits old Piero has made of us. Is it not a dainty device? and the credit of choosing it is mine."

"Ah! it is you—it is perfect!" said Romola, looking with moist joyful eyes at the miniature Bacchus, with his

purple clusters. "And I am Ariadne, and you are crowning me! Yes. it is true, Tito; you have crowned my poor life."

They held each other's hands while she spoke, and both looked at their imaged selves. But the reality was far more beautiful; she all lily-white and golden, and he with his dark glowing beauty above the purple red-bordered tunic.

"And it was our good strange Piero who painted it?" said Romola. "Did you put it into his head to paint me as Antigone, that he might have my likeness for this?"

"No, it was he who made my getting leave for him to paint you and your father, a condition of his doing this for me."

"Ah! I see now what it was you gave up your precious ring for. I perceived you had some cunning plan to give me pleasure."

Tito did not blench. Romola's little illusions about himself had long ceased to cause him anything but satisfaction. He only smiled and said—

"I might have spared my ring; Piero will accept no money from me; he thinks himself paid by painting you. And now, while I am away, you will look every day at those pretty symbols of our life together—the ship on the calm sea, and the ivy that never withers, and those Loves that have left off wounding us and shower soft petals that are like our kisses; and the leopards and tigers, they are the troubles of your life that are all quelled now; and the strange sea-monsters, with their merry eyes—let us see—they are the dull passages in the heavy books, which have begun to be amusing since we have sat by each other."

"Tito mio!" said Romola, in a half-laughing voice of love; "but you will give me the key?" she added, holding out her hand for it.

"Not at all!" said Tito, with playful decision, opening his scarsella and dropping in the little key. "I shall drown it in the Arno."

"But if I ever wanted to look at the crucifix again?"

"Ah! for that very reason it is hidden—hidden by these images of youth and joy."

He pressed a light kiss on her brow, and she said no more, ready to submit, like all strong souls, when she felt no valid reason for resistance.

And then they joined the waiting company, which made a dignified little procession as it passed along the Ponte

Rubaconte toward Santa Croce. Slowly it passed, for Bardo, unaccustomed for years to leave his own house, walked with a more timid step than usual; and that slow pace suited well with the gouty dignity of Messer Bartolommeo Scala, who graced the occasion by his presence, along with his daughter Alessandra. It was customary to have very long troops of kindred and friends at the *sposalzio*, or betrothal, and it had even been found necessary in time past to limit the number by law to no more than *four hundred*—two hundred on each side; for since the guests were all feasted after this initial ceremony, as well as after the *nozze*, or marriage, the very first stage of matrimony had become a ruinous expense, as that scholarly Benedict, Leonardo Bruno, complained in his own case. But Bardo, who in his poverty had kept himself proudly free from any appearance of claiming the advantages attached to a powerful family name, would have no invitations given on the strength of mere friendship; and the modest procession of twenty that followed the *sposi* were, with three or four exceptions, friends of Bardo's and Tito's selected on personal grounds.

Bernardo del Nero walked as a vanguard before Bardo, who was led on the right by Tito, while Romola held her father's other hand. Bardo had himself been married at Santa Croce, and had insisted on Romola's being betrothed and married there, rather than in the little church of Santa Lucia close by their house, because he had a complete mental vision of the grand church where he hoped that a burial might be granted him among the Florentines who had deserved well. Happily the way was short and direct, and lay aloof from the loudest riot of the Carnival, if only they could return before any dances or shows began in the great piazza of Santa Croce. The west was red as they passed the bridge, and shed a mellow light on the pretty procession, which had a touch of solemnity in the presence of the blind father. But when the ceremony was over, and Tito and Romola came out on to the broad steps of the church, with the golden links of destiny on their fingers, the evening had deepened into struggling starlight, and the servants had their torches lit.

While they came out, a strange dreary chant, as of a *Miserere*, met their ears, and they saw that at the extreme end of the piazza there seemed to be a stream of people impelled by something approaching from the Borgo de Greci.

"It is one of their masked processions, I suppose," said Tito, who was now alone with Romola, while Bernardo took charge of Bardo.

And as he spoke there came slowly into view, at a height far above the heads of the on-lookers, a huge and ghastly image of Winged Time with his scythe and hour-glass, surrounded by his winged children, the Hours. He was mounted on a high car completely covered with black, and the bullocks that drew the car were also covered with black, their horns alone standing out white above the gloom; so that in the sombre shadow of the houses it seemed to those at a distance as if Time and his children were apparitions floating through the air. And behind them came what looked like a troop of the sheeted dead gliding above blackness. And as they glided slowly, they chanted in a wailing strain.

A cold horror seized on Romola, for at the first moment it seemed as if her brother's vision, which could never be effaced from her mind, was being half-fulfilled. She clung to Tito, who, divining what was in her thoughts, said —

"What dismal fooling sometimes pleases your Florentines! Doubtless this is an invention of Piero di Cosimo, who loves such grim merriment."

"Tito, I wish it had not happened. It will deepen the images of that vision which I would fain be rid of."

"Nay, Romola, you will look only at the images of our happiness now. I have locked all sadness away from you."

"But it is still there—it is only hidden," said Romola, in a low tone, hardly conscious that she spoke.

"See, they are all gone now!" said Tito. "You will forget this ghastly mummerly when we are in the light, and can see each other's eyes. My Ariadne must never look backward now—only forward to Easter, when she will triumph with her Care-dispeller."

BOOK II.

CHAPTER XXI.

FLORENCE EXPECTS A GUEST.

It was the seventeenth of November 1494: more than eighteen months since Tito and Romola had been finally united in the joyous Easter time, and had had a rainbow-tinted shower of comfits thrown over them, after the ancient Greek fashion, in token that the heavens would shower sweets on them through all their double life.

Since that Easter a great change had come over the prospects of Florence; and as in the tree that bears a myriad of blossoms, each single bud with its fruit is dependent on the primary circulation of the sap, so the fortunes of Tito and Romola were dependent on certain grand political and social conditions which made an epoch in the history of Italy.

In this very November, little more than a week ago, the spirit of the old centuries seemed to have re-entered the breasts of Florentines. The great bell in the palace tower had rung out the hammer-sound of alarm, and the people had mustered with their rusty arms, their tools and impromptu cudgels, to drive out the Medici. The gate of San Gallo had been fairly shut on the arrogant, exasperating Piero, galloping away toward Bologna with his hired horsemen frightened behind him, and shut on his keener young brother, the cardinal, escaping in the disguise of a Franciscan monk: a price had been set on both their heads. After that, there had been some sacking of houses, according to old precedent; the ignominious images, painted on the public buildings, of men who had conspired against the Medici in days gone by, were effaced; the exiled enemies of the Medici were invited home. The half-fledged tyrants were fairly out of their splendid nest in the Via Larga, and the Republic had recovered the use of its will again.

But now, a week later, the great palace in the Via Larga had been prepared for the reception of another tenant; and if drapery roofing the streets with unwonted color, if

banners and hangings poured out of the windows, if carpets and tapestry stretched over all steps and pavement on which exceptional feet might tread, were an unquestionable proof of joy, Florence was joyful in the expectation of its new guest. The stream of color flowed from the palace in the Via Larga round by the Cathedral, then by the great Piazza della Signoria, and across the Ponte Vecchio to the Porta San Frediano—the gate that looks toward Pisa. There, near the gate, a platform and canopy had been erected for the Signoria; and Messer Luca Corsini, doctor of law, felt his heart palpitating a little with the sense that he had a Latin oration to read; and every chief elder in Florence had to make himself ready, with smooth chin and well-lined silk lucco, to walk in procession; and the well-born youths were looking at their rich new tunics after the French mode which was to impress the stranger as having a peculiar grace when worn by Florentines; and a large body of the clergy, from the archbishop in his effulgence to the train of monks, black, white, and gray, were consulting betimes in the morning how they should marshal themselves, with their burden of relics and sacred banners and consecrated jewels, that their movements might be adjusted to the expected arrival of the illustrious visitor, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

An unexampled visitor ! For he had come through the passes of the Alps with such an army as Italy had not seen before; with thousands of terrible Swiss, well used to fight for love and hatred as well as for hire; with a host of gallant cavaliers proud of a name; with an unprecedented infantry, in which every man in an hundred carried an arquebus; nay, with cannon of bronze, shooting not stones but iron balls, drawn not by bullocks but by horses, and capable of firing a second time before a city could mend the breach made by the first ball. Some compared the new-comer to Charlemagne, reputed rebuilder of Florence, welcome conqueror of degenerate kings, regulator and benefactor of the Church; some preferred the comparison to Cyrus, liberator of the chosen people, restorer of the Temple. For he had come across the Alps with the most glorious projects; he was to march through Italy amidst the jubilees of a grateful and admiring people; he was to satisfy all conflicting complaints at Rome; he was to take possession, by virtue of hereditary right and a little fighting, of the kingdom of Naples; and from that convenient starting-point he was to set out on the conquest of the

Turks, who were partly to be cut to pieces and partly converted to the faith of Christ. It was a scheme that seemed to befit the Most Christian King, head of a nation which, thanks to the devices of a subtle Louis the Eleventh who had died in much fright as to his personal prospects ten years before, had become the strongest of Christians monarchies; and this antitype of Cyrus and Charlemagne was no other than the son of that subtle Louis—the young Charles the Eighth of France.

Surely, on a general statement, hardly anything could seem more grandiose, or fitter to revive in the breasts of men the memory of great dispensations by which new strata had been laid in the history of mankind. And there was a very widely spread conviction that the advent of the French king and his army into Italy was one of those events at which marble statues might well be believed to perspire, phantasmal fiery warriors to fight in the air, and quadrupeds to bring forth monstrous births—that it did not belong to the usual order of Providence, but was in a peculiar sense the work of God. It was a conviction that rested less on the necessarily momentous character of a powerful foreign invasion than on certain moral emotions to which the aspect of the times gave the form of presentiments: emotions which had found a very remarkable utterance in the voice of a single man.

That man was Fra Girolamo Savonarola, Prior of the Dominican convent of San Marco, in Florence. On a September morning, when men's ears were ringing with the news that the French army had entered Italy, he had preached in the Cathedral of Florence from the text, "Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth." He believed it was by supreme guidance that he had reached just so far in his exposition of Genesis the previous Lent; and he believed the "flood of water"—emblem at once of avenging wrath and purifying mercy—to be the divinely-indicated symbol of the French army. His audience, some of whom were held to be among the choicest spirits of the age—the most cultivated men in the most cultivated of Italian cities—believed it too, and listened with shuddering awe. For this man had a power rarely paralleled of impressing his beliefs on others, and of swaying very various minds. And as long as four years ago he had proclaimed from the chief pulpit of Florence that a scourge was about to descend on Italy, and that by this scourge the Church was to be purified. Savonarola

appeared to believe, and his hearers more or less waveringly believed, that he had a mission like that of the Hebrew prophets, and that the Florentines amongst whom his message was delivered, were in some sense a second chosen people. The idea of prophetic gifts was not a remote one in that age: seers of visions, circumstantial heralds of things to be were far from uncommon, either outside or inside the cloister; but this very fact made Savonarola stand out the more conspicuously as a grand exception. While in others the gift of prophecy was very much like a farthing candle illuminating small corners of human destiny with prophetic gossip, in Savonarola it was like a mighty beacon shining far out for the warning and guidance of men. And to some of the soberest minds the supernatural character of his insight into the future gathered a strong attestation from the peculiar conditions of the age.

At the close of 1492, the year in which Lorenzo de Medici died and Tito Melema came as a wanderer to Florence, Italy was enjoying a peace and prosperity unthreatened by any near and definite danger. There was no fear of famine, for the seasons had been plenteous in corn, and wine, and oil; new palaces had been rising in all fair cities, new villas on pleasant slopes and summits; and the men who had more than their share of these good things were in no fear of the large number who had less. For the citizens' armor was getting rusty, and populations seemed to have become tame, licking the hands of masters who paid for a ready-made army when they wanted it, as they paid for goods at Smyrna. Even the fear of the Turk had ceased to be active, and the Pope found it more immediately profitable to accept bribes from him for a little prospective poisoning than to form plans either for conquering or for converting him.

Altogether this world, with its partitioned empire and its roomy universal Church, seemed to be a handsome establishment for the few who were lucky or wise enough to reap the advantages of human folly: a world in which lust and obscenity, lying and treachery, oppression and murder, were pleasant, useful, and, when properly managed, not dangerous. And as a sort of fringe or adornment to the substantial delights of tyranny, avarice, and lasciviousness, there was the patronage of polite learning and the fine arts, so that flattery could always be had in the choicest Latin to be commanded at that time, and sublime

artists were at hand to paint the holy and the unclean with impartial skill. The Church, it was said, had never been so disgraced in its head, had never shown so few signs of renovating, vital belief in its lower members; nevertheless it was much more prosperous than in some past days. The heavens were fair and smiling above; and below there were no signs of earthquake.

Yet at that time, as we have seen, there was a man in Florence who for two years and more had been preaching that a scourge was at hand; that the world was certainly not framed for the lasting convenience of hypocrites, libertines, and oppressors. From the midst of those smiling heavens he had seen a sword hanging—the sword of God’s justice—which was speedily to descend with purifying punishment on the Church and the world. In brilliant Ferrara, seventeen years before, the contradiction between men’s lives and their professed beliefs had pressed upon him with a force that had been enough to destroy his appetite for the world, and at the age of twenty-three had driven him into the cloister. He believed that God had committed to the Church the sacred lamp of truth for the guidance and salvation of men, and he saw that the Church, in its corruption, had become a sepulchre to hide the lamp. As the years went on scandals increased and multiplied, and hypocrisy seemed to have given place to impudence. Had the world, then, ceased to have a righteous Ruler? Was the Church finally forsaken? No, assuredly: in the Sacred Book there was a record of the past in which might be seen as in a glass what would be in the days to come, and the book showed that when the wickedness of the chosen people, type of the Christian Church, had become crying, the judgments of God had descended on them. Nay, reason itself declared that vengeance was imminent, for what else would suffice to turn men from their obstinacy in evil? And unless the Church were reclaimed, how could the promises be fulfilled, that the heathens should be converted and the whole world become subject to the one true law? He had seen his belief reflected in visions—a mode of seeing which had been frequent with him from his youth up.

But the real force of demonstration for Girolamo Savonarola lay in his own burning indignation at the sight of wrong; in his fervent belief in an Unseen Justice that would put an end to the wrong, and in an Unseen Purity to which lying and uncleanness were an abomination. To

his ardent, power-loving soul, believing in great ends, and longing to achieve those ends by the exertion of its own strong will, the faith in a supreme and righteous Ruler became one with the faith in a speedy divine interposition that would punish and reclaim.

Meanwhile, under that splendid masquerade of dignities sacred and secular which seemed to make the life of lucky Churchmen and princely families so luxurious and amusing, there were certain conditions at work which slowly tended to disturb the general festivity. Ludovico Sforza—copious in gallantry, splendid patron of an incomparable Leonardo da Vinci—holding the ducal crown of Milan in his grasp, and wanting to put it on his own head rather than let it rest on that of a feeble nephew who would take very little to poison him, was much afraid of the Spanish-born old King Ferdinand and the Crown Prince Alfonso of Naples, who, not liking cruelty and treachery which were useless to themselves, objected to the poisoning of a near relative for the advantage of a Lombard usurper; the royalties of Naples again were afraid of their suzerain, Pope Alexander Borgia; all three were anxiously watching Florence, lest with its midway territory it should determine the game by underhand backing; and all four, with every small state in Italy, were afraid of Venice—Venice the cautious, the stable, and the strong, that wanted to stretch its arms not only along both sides of the Adriatic but across to the ports of the western coast.

Lorenzo de Medici, it was thought, did much to prevent the fatal outbreak of such jealousies, keeping up the old Florentine alliance with Naples and the Pope, and yet persuading Milan that the alliance was for the general advantage. But young Piero de Medici's rash vanity had quickly nullified the effect of his father's wary policy, and Ludovico Sforza, roused to suspicion of a league against him, thought of a move which would checkmate his adversaries: he determined to invite the French king to march into Italy, and, as heir of the house of Anjou, take possession of Naples. Ambassadors—"orators," as they were called in those haranguing times—went and came; a recusant cardinal, determined not to acknowledge a Pope elected by bribery (and his own particular enemy), went and came also, and seconded the invitation with hot rhetoric; and the young king seemed to lend a willing ear. So that in 1493 the rumor spread and became louder and louder that King Charles VIII. of France was about to cross the Alps with a

mighty army; and the Italian populations, accustomed, since Italy had ceased to be the heart of the Roman empire, to look for an arbitrator from afar, began vaguely to regard his coming as a means of avenging their wrongs and redressing their grievances.

And in that rumor Savonarola had heard the assurance that his prophecy was being verified. What was it that filled the ears of the prophets of old but the distant tread of foreign armies, coming to do the work of justice? He no longer looked vaguely to the horizon for the coming storm: he pointed to the rising cloud. The French army was that new deluge which was to purify the earth from iniquity; the French king, Charles VIII., was the instrument elected by God, as Cyrus had been of old, and all men who desired good rather than evil were to rejoice in his coming. For the scourge would fall destructively on the impenitent alone. Let any city of Italy, let Florence above all—Florence beloved of God, since to its ear the warning voice had been specially sent—repent and turn from its ways, like Nineveh of old, and the storm-cloud would roll over it and leave only refreshing raindrops.

Fra Girolamo's word was powerful; yet now that the new Cyrus had already been three months in Italy, and was not far from the gates of Florence, his presence was expected there with mixed feelings, in which fear and distrust certainly predominated. At present it was not understood that he had redressed any grievances; and the Florentines clearly had nothing to thank him for. He held their strong frontier fortresses, which Piero de Medici had given up to him without securing any honorable terms in return; he had done nothing to quell the alarming revolt at Pisa, which had been encouraged by his presence to throw off the Florentine yoke; and "orators," even with a prophet at their head, could win no assurance from him, except that he would settle everything when he was once within the walls of Florence. Still, there was the satisfaction of knowing that the exasperating Piero de Medici had been fairly pelted out for the ignominious surrender of the fortresses, and in that act of energy the spirit of the Republic had recovered some of its old fire.

The preparations for the equivocal guest were not entirely those of a city resigned to submission. Behind the bright drapery and banners symbolical of joy, there were preparations of another sort made with common accord by government and people. Well hidden within

walls there were hired soldiers of the Republic, hastily called in from the surrounding districts; there were old arms duly furbished, and sharp tools and heavy cudgels laid carefully at hand, to be snatched up on short notice; there were excellent boards and stakes to form barricades upon occasion, and a good supply of stones to make a surprising hail from the upper windows. Above all, there were people very strongly in the humor for fighting any personage who might be supposed to have designs of hectoring over them, they having lately tasted that new pleasure with much relish. This humor was not diminished by the sight of occasional parties of Frenchmen, coming beforehand to choose their quarters, with a hawk, perhaps, on their left wrist, and, metaphorically speaking, a piece of chalk in their right hand to mark Italian doors withal; especially as creditable historians imply that many sons of France were at that time characterized by something approaching to a swagger, which must have whetted the Florentine appetite for a little stone-throwing.

And this was the temper of Florence on the morning of the seventeenth of November, 1494.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PRISONERS.

THE sky was gray, but that made little difference in the Piazza del Duomo, which was covered with its holiday sky of blue drapery, and its constellations of yellow lilies and coats of arms. The sheaves of banners were unfurled at the angles of the Baptistery, but there was no carpet yet on the steps of the Duomo, for the marble was being trodden by numerous feet that were not at all exceptional. It was the hour of the Advent sermons, and the very same reasons which had flushed the streets with holiday color were reasons why the preaching in the Duomo could least of all be dispensed with.

But not all the feet in the Piazza were hastening toward the steps. People of high and low degree were moving to and fro with the brisk pace of men who had errands before them; groups of talkers were thickly scattered, some will-

ing to be late for the sermon, and others content not to hear it at all.

The expression on the faces of these apparent loungers was not that of men who are enjoying the pleasant laziness of an opening holiday. Some were in close and eager discussion; others were listening with keen interest to a single spokesman, and yet from time to time turned round with a scanning glance at any new passer-by. At the corner, looking toward the Via de Cerretani—just where the artificial rainbow light of the Piazza ceased, and the gray morning fell on the sombre stone houses—there was a remarkable cluster of the working people, most of them bearing on their dress or persons the signs of their daily labor, and almost all of them carrying some weapon, or some tool which might serve as a weapon upon occasion. Standing in the gray light of the street, with bare brawny arms and soiled garments, they made all the more striking the transition from the brightness of the Piazza. They were listening to the thin notary, Ser Cioni, who had just paused on his way to the Duomo. His biting words could get only a contemptuous reception two years and a half before in the Mercato, but now he spoke with the more complacent humor of a man whose party is uppermost, and who is conscious of some influence with the people.

“Never talk to me,” he was saying, in his incisive voice, “never talk to me of bloodthirsty Swiss or fierce French infantry: they might as well be in the narrow passes of the mountains as in our streets; and peasants have destroyed the finest armies of our condottieri in time past, when they had once got them between steep precipices. I tell you, Florentines need be afraid of no army in their own streets.”

“That’s true, Ser Cioni,” said a man whose arms and hands were discolored by a crimson dye, which looked like blood-stains, and who had a small hatchet stuck in his belt; “and those French cavaliers, who came in squaring themselves in their smart doublets the other day, saw a sample of the dinner we could serve up for them. I was carrying my cloth in Ognissanti, when I saw my fine Messeri going by, looking round as if they thought the houses of the Vespucci and the Agli a poor pick of lodgings for them, and eyeing us Florentines, like top-knotted cocks as they are, as if they pitied us because we didn’t know how to strut. ‘Yes, my fine Galli,’ says I, ‘stick out your stomachs; I’ve got a meat-axe in my belt that

will go inside you all the easier'; when presently the old cow lowed,* and I knew something had happened—no matter what. So I threw my cloth in at the first doorway, and took hold of my meat-axe and ran after my fine cavaliers toward the Vigna Nuova. And, 'What is it, Guccio?' said I, when he came up with me. 'I think it's the Medici coming back,' said Guccio. *Bembè!* I expected so! And up we reared a barricade, and the Frenchmen looked behind and saw themselves in a trap; and up comes a good swarm of our *Ciompi*,† and one of them with a big scythe he had in his hand mowed off one of the fine cavalier's feathers:—its true! And the lasses peppered a few stones down to frighten them. However, Piero de Medici wasn't come after all; and it was a pity; for we'd have left him neither legs nor wings to go away with again."

"Well spoken, Oddo," said a young butcher, with his knife at his belt; and it's my belief Piero will be a good while before he wants to come back, for he looked as frightened as a hunted chicken, when we hustled and pelted him in the piazza. He's a coward, else he might have made a better stand when he'd got his horsemen. But we'll swallow no Medici any more, whatever else the French king wants to make us swallow."

"But I like not those French cannon they talk of," said Goro, none the less fat for two years' additional grievances. "San Giovanni defend us! If Messer Domeneddio means so well by us as your Frate says he does, Ser Cioni, why shouldn't he have sent the French another way to Naples?"

"Ay, Goro," said the dyer; "that's a question worth putting. Thou art not such a pumpkin-head as I took thee for. Why, they might have gone to Naples by Bologna, eh, Ser Cioni? or if they'd gone to Arezzo—we wouldn't have minded their going to Arezzo."

"Fools! It will be for the good and glory of Florence," Ser Cioni began. But he was interrupted by the exclamation, "Look there!" which burst from several voices at once, while the faces were all turned to a party who were advancing along the Via de Cerretani.

"It's Lorenzo Tornabouni, and one of the French noblemen who are in his house," said Ser Cioni, in some con-

* "*La vacca muglia*" was the phrase for the sounding of the great bell in the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio.

† The poorer artisans connected with the wool trade—wool-beaters, carders, washers, etc.

tempt at this interruption. "He pretends to look well satisfied—that deep Tornabuoni—but he's a Medicean in his heart: mind that."

The advancing party was rather a brilliant one, for there was not only the distinguished presence of Lorenzo Tornabuoni, and the splendid costume of the Frenchman with his elaborately displayed white linen and gorgeous embroidery; there were two other Florentines of high birth in handsome dresses donned for the coming procession, and on the left hand of the Frenchman was a figure that was not to be eclipsed by any amount of intention or brocade—a figure we have often seen before. He wore nothing but black, for he was in mourning; but the black was presently to be covered by a red mantle, for he too was to walk in procession as Latin Secretary to the Ten. Tito Melema had become conspicuously servicable in the intercourse with the French guests, from his familiarity with Southern Italy, and his readiness in the French tongue, which he had spoken in his early youth; and he had paid more than one visit to the French camp at Signa. The lustre of good fortune was upon him; he was smiling, listening, and explaining, with his usual graceful unpretentious ease, and only a very keen eye bent on studying him could have marked a certain amount of change in him which was not to be accounted for by the lapse of eighteen months. It was that change which comes from the final departure of moral youthfulness—from the distinct self-conscious adoption of a part in life. The lines of the face were as soft as ever, the eyes as pellucid; but something was gone—something as indefinable as the changes in the morning twilight.

The Frenchman was gathering instructions concerning ceremonial before riding back to Signa, and now he was going to have a final survey of the Piazza del Duomo, where the royal procession was to pause for religious purposes. The distinguished party attracted the notice of all eyes as it entered the piazza, but the gaze was not entirely cordial and admiring; there were remarks not altogether allusive and mysterious to the Frenchman's hoof-shaped shoes—delicate flattery of royal superfluity in toes; and there was no care that certain snarlings at "Mediceans" should be strictly inaudible. But Lorenzo Tornabuoni possessed that power of dissembling annoyance which is demanded in a man who courts popularity, and Tito, besides his natural disposition to overcome ill-will by good-

humor, had the unimpassioned feeling of the alien toward names and details that move the deepest passions of the native.

Arrived where they could get a good oblique view of the Duomo, the party paused. The festoons and devices placed over the central doorway excited some demur, and Torna-buoni beckoned to Piero di Cosimo, who, as was usual with him at this hour, was lounging in front of Nello's shop. There was soon an animated discussion, and it became highly amusing from the Frenchman's astonishment at Piero's odd pungency of statement, which Tito translated literally. Even snarling onlookers became curious, and their faces began to wear the half-smiling, half-humiliated expression of people who are not within hearing of the joke which is producing infectious laughter. It was a delightful moment for Tito, for he was the only one of the party who could have made so amusing an interpreter, and without any disposition to triumphant self-gratulation he revelled in the sense that he was an object of liking—he basked in approving glances. The rainbow light fell about the laughing group, and the grave church-goers had all disappeared within the walls. It seemed as if the piazza had been decorated for a real Florentine holiday.

Meanwhile in the gray light of the unadorned streets there were on-comers who made no show of linen and brocade, and whose humor was far from merry. Here, too, the French dress and hooped shoes were conspicuous, but they were being pressed upon by a larger and larger number of non-admiring Florentines. In the van of the crowd were three men in scanty clothing; each had his hands bound together by a cord, and a rope was fastened round his neck and body, in such a way that he who held the extremity of the rope might easily check any rebellious movement by the threat of throttling. The men who held the ropes were French soldiers, and by broken Italian phrases and strokes from the knotted end of the rope, they from time to time stimulated their prisoners to beg. Two of them were obedient, and to every Florentine they had encountered had held out their bound hands and said in piteous tones—

“For the love of God and the Holy Madonna, give us something toward our ransom! We are Tuscans: we were made prisoners in Lunigiana.”

But the third man remained obstinately silent under all the strokes of the knotted cord. He was very different in

aspect from his two fellow-prisoners. They were young and hardy, and, in the scant clothing which the avarice of their captors had left them, looked like vulgar, sturdy mendicants. But he had passed the boundary of old age, and could hardly be less than four or five and sixty. His beard, which had grown long in neglect, and the hair which fell thick and straight round his baldness, were nearly white. His thickset figure was still firm and upright, though emaciated, and seemed to express energy in spite of age—an expression that was partly carried out in the dark eyes and strong dark eyebrows, which had a strangely isolated intensity of color in the midst of his yellow, bloodless, deep-wrinkled face with its lank gray hairs. And yet there was something fitful in the eyes which contradicted the occasional flash of energy: after looking round with quick fierceness at windows and faces, they fell again with a lost and wandering look. But his lips were motionless, and he held his hands resolutely down. He would not beg.

This sight had been witnessed by the Florentines with growing exasperation. Many standing at their doors or passing quietly along had at once given money—some in half-automatic response to an appeal in the name of God, others in that unquestioning awe of the French soldiery which had been created by the reports of their cruel warfare, and on which the French themselves counted as a guarantee of immunity in their acts of insolence. But as the group had proceeded farther into the heart of the city, that compliance had gradually disappeared, and the soldiers found themselves escorted by a gathering troop of men and boys, who kept up a chorus of exclamations, sufficiently intelligible to foreign ears without any interpreter. The soldiers themselves began to dislike their position, for, with a strong inclination to use their weapons, they were checked by the necessity for keeping a secure hold on their prisoners, and they were now hurrying along in the hope of finding shelter in a hostelry.

“French dogs!” “Bullock-feet!” “Snatch their pikes from them!” “Cut the cords and make them run for their prisoners. They’ll run as fast as geese—don’t you see they’re web-footed?” These were the cries which the soldiers vaguely understood to be jeers, and probably threats. But every one seemed disposed to give invitations of this spirited kind rather than to act upon them.

“Santiddio! here’s a sight!” said the dyer, as soon as he

had divined the meaning of the advancing tumult, "and the fools do nothing but hoot. Come along!" he added, snatching his axe from his belt, and running to join the crowd, followed by the butcher and all the rest of his companions, except Goro, who hastily retreated up a narrow passage.

The sight of the dyer, running forward with blood-red arms and axe uplifted, and with his cluster of rough companions behind him, had a stimulating effect on the crowd. Not that he did anything else than pass beyond the soldiers and thrust himself well among his fellow-citizens, flourishing his axe; but he served as a stirring symbol of street fighting, like the waving of a well-known gonfalon. And the first sign that fire was ready to burst out was something as rapid as a little leaping tongue of flame: it was an act of the conjuror's impish lad, Lollo, who was dancing and jeering in front of the ingenuous boys that made the majority of the crowd. Lollo had no great compassion for the prisoners, but being conscious of an excellent knife which was his unfailing companion, it had seemed to him from the first that to jump forward, cut a rope, and leap back again before the soldier who held it could use his weapon, would be an amusing and dexterous piece of mischief. And now, when the people began to hoot and jostle more vigorously, Lollo felt that his moment was come—he was close to the eldest prisoner: in an instant he had cut the cord.

"Run, old one!" he piped in the prisoner's ear as soon as the cord was in two; and himself set the example of running as if he were helped along with wings, like a scared fowl.

The prisoner's sensations were not too slow for him to seize the opportunity: the idea of escape had been continually present with him, and he had gathered fresh hope from the temper of the crowd. He ran at once; but his speed would hardly have sufficed for him if the Florentines had not instantaneously rushed between him and his captor. He ran on into the piazza, but he quickly heard the tramp of feet behind him, for the other two prisoners had been released, and the soldiers were struggling and fighting their way after them, in such tardigrade fashion as their hoof-shaped shoes would allow—impeded, but not very resolutely attacked, by the people. One of the two younger prisoners turned up the Borgo di San Lorenzo, and thus made a partial diversion of the hubbub; but the

main struggle was still toward the piazza, where all eyes were turned on it with alarmed curiosity. The cause could not be precisely guessed, for the French dress was screened by the impeding crowd.

"An escape of prisoners," said Lorenzo Tornabuoni, as he and his party turned round just against the steps of the Duomo, and saw a prisoner rushing by them. "The people are not content with having emptied the Bargello the other day. If there is no other authority in sight they must fall on the sbirri and secure freedom to thieves. Ah! there is a French soldier: that is more serious."

The soldier he saw was struggling along on the north side of the piazza, but the object of his pursuit had taken the other direction. That object was the eldest prisoner, who had wheeled round the Baptistery and was running toward the Duomo, determined to take refuge in that sanctuary rather than trust to his speed. But in mounting the steps, his foot received a shock; he was precipitated toward the group of signori, whose backs were turned to him, and was only able to recover his balance as he clutched one of them by the arm.

It was Tito Melema who felt that clutch. He turned his head, and saw the face of his adopted father, Baldassarre Calvo, close to his own.

The two men looked at each other, silent as death: Baldassarre, with dark fierceness and a tightening grip of the soiled worn hands on the velvet-clad arm; Tito, with cheeks and lips all bloodless, fascinated by terror. It seemed a long while to them—it was but a moment.

The first sound Tito heard was the short laugh of Piero di Cosimo, who stood close by him and was the only person that could see his face.

"Ha, ha! I know what a ghost should be now."

"This is another escaped prisoner," said Lorenzo Tornabuoni. "Who is he, I wonder?"

"*Some madman, surely,*" said Tito.

He hardly knew how the words had come to his lips: there are moments when our passions speak and decide for us, and we seem to stand by and wonder. They carry in them an inspiration of crime, that in one instant does the work of long premeditation.

The two men had not taken their eyes off each other, and it seemed to Tito, when he had spoken, that some magical poison had darted from Baldassarre's eyes, and

that he felt it rushing through his veins. But the next instant the grasp on his arm had relaxed, and Baldassarre had disappeared within the church.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AFTER-THOUGHTS.

"You are easily frightened, though," said Piero, with another scornful laugh. "My portrait is not as good as the original. But the old fellow *had* a tiger look: I must go into the Duomo and see him again."

"It is not pleasant to be laid hold of by a madman, if madman he be," said Lorenzo Tornabuoni, in polite excuse of Tito, "but perhaps he is only a ruffian. We shall hear. I think we must see if we have authority enough to stop this disturbance between our people and your countrymen," he added, addressing the Frenchman.

They advanced toward the crowd with their swords drawn, all the quiet spectators making an escort for them. Tito went too: it was necessary that he should know what others knew about Baldassarre, and the first palsy of terror was being succeeded by the rapid devices to which mortal danger will stimulate the timid.

The rabble of men and boys, more inclined to hoot at the soldier and torment him than to receive or inflict any serious wounds, gave way at the approach of signori with drawn swords, and the French soldier was interrogated. He and his companions had simply brought their prisoners into the city that they might beg money for their ransom: two of the prisoners were Tuscan soldiers taken in Lunigiana; the other, an elderly man, was with a party of Genoese, with whom the French foragers had come to blows near Fivizzano. He might be mad, but he was harmless. The soldier knew no more, being unable to understand a word the old man said. Tito heard so far, but he was deaf to everything else till he was specially addressed. It was Tornabuoni who spoke.

"Will you go back with us, Melema? Or, since Messere is going off to Signa now, will you wisely follow the fashion of the times and go to hear the Frate, who will be like the torrent at its height this morning? It's what we must all

do, you know, if we are to save our Medicean skins. *I* should go if I had the leisure."

Tito's face had recovered its color now, and he could make an effort to speak with gaiety.

"Of course I am among the admirers of the inspired orator," he said, smilingly; but, unfortunately, I shall be occupied with the Segretario till the time of the procession."

"*I* am going into the Duomo to look at that savage old man again," said Piero.

"Then have the charity to show him to one of the hospital's for travellers, Piero mio," said Tornabuoni. "The monks may find out whether he wants putting into a cage."

The party separated, and Tito took his way to the Palazzo Vecchio, where he was to find Bartolommeo Scala. It was not a long walk, but, for Tito, it was stretched out like the minutes of our morning dreams: the short spaces of street and piazza held memories, and previsions, and torturing fears, that might have made the history of months. He felt as if a serpent had begun to coil round his limbs. Baldassarre living, and in Florence, was a living revenge, which would no more rest than a winding serpent would rest until it had crushed its prey. It was not in the nature of that man to let an injury pass unavenged: his love and his hatred were of that passionate fervor which subjugates all the rest of the being, and makes a man sacrifice himself to his passion as if it were a deity to be worshipped with self-destruction. Baldassarre had relaxed his hold, and had disappeared. Tito knew well how to interpret that: it meant that the vengeance was to be studied that it might be sure. If he had not uttered those decisive words—"He is a madman"—if he could have summoned up the state of mind, the courage, necessary for avowing his recognition of Baldassarre, would not the risk have been less? He might have declared himself to have had what he believed to be positive evidence of Baldassarre's death; and the only persons who could ever have had positive knowledge to contradict him were Fra Luca, who was dead, and the crew of the companion galley, who had brought him the news of the encounter with the pirates. The chances were infinite against Baldassarre's having met again with any one of that crew, and Tito thought with bitterness that a timely, well-devised falsehood might have saved him from any fatal conse-

quences. But to have told that falsehood would have required perfect self-command in the moment of a convulsive shock: he seemed to have spoken without any pre-conception: the words had leaped forth like a sudden birth that had been begotten and nourished in the darkness.

Tito was experiencing that inexorable law of human souls, that we prepare ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil which gradually determines character.

There was but one chance for him now; the chance of Baldassarre's failure in finding his revenge. And—Tito grasped at a thought more actively cruel than any he had ever encouraged before: might not his own unpremeditated words have some truth in them? Enough truth, at least, to bear him out in his denial of any declaration Baldassarre might make about him? The old man looked strange and wild; with his eager heart and brain, suffering was likely enough to have produced madness. If it were so, the vengeance that strove to inflict disgrace might be baffled.

But there was another form of vengeance not to be baffled by ingenious lying. Baldassarre belonged to a race to whom the thrust of the dagger seems almost as natural an impulse as the outleap of the tiger's talons. Tito shrank with shuddering dread from disgrace; but he had also that physical dread which is inseparable from a soft, pleasure-loving nature, and which prevents a man from meeting wounds and death as a welcome relief from disgrace. His thoughts flew at once to some hidden defensive armor that might save him from a vengeance which no subtlety could parry.

He wondered at the power of the passionate fear that possessed him. It was as if he had been smitten with a blighting disease that had suddenly turned the joyous sense of young life into pain.

There was still one resource open to Tito. He might have turned back, sought Baldassarre again, confessed everything to him—to Romola—to all the world. But he never thought of that. The repentance which cuts off all moorings to evil, demands something more than selfish fear. He had no sense that there was strength and safety in truth; the only strength he trusted to lay in his ingenuity and his dissimulation. Now that the first shock, which had called up the traitorous signs of fear, was well past, he hoped to be prepared for all emergencies by cool deceit—and defensive armor.

It was a characteristic fact in Tito's experience at this crisis, that no direct measure for ridding himself of Baldassarre ever occurred to him. All other possibilities passed through his mind, even to his own flight from Florence; but he never thought of any scheme for removing his enemy. His dread generated no active malignity, and he would still have been glad not to give pain to any mortal. He had simply chosen to make life easy to himself—to carry his human lot, if possible, in such a way that it should pinch him nowhere; and the choice had, at various times, landed him in unexpected positions. The question now was, not whether he should divide the common pressure of destiny with his suffering fellow-men; it was whether all the resources of lying would save him from being crushed by the consequences of that habitual choice.

CHAPTER XXIV.

INSIDE THE DUOMO.

WHEN Baldassarre, with his hands bound together, and the rope round his neck and body, pushed his way behind the curtain, and saw the interior of the Duomo before him, he gave a start of astonishment, and stood still against the doorway. He had expected to see a vast nave empty of everything but lifeless emblems—side altars with candles unlit, dim pictures, pale and rigid statues—with perhaps a few worshippers in the distant choir following a monotonous chant. That was the ordinary aspect of churches to a man who never went into them with any religious purpose.

And he saw, instead, a vast multitude of warm, living faces, upturned in breathless silence toward the pulpit, at the angle between the nave and the choir. The multitude was of all ranks, from magistrates and dames of gentle nurture to coarsely-clad artisans and country people. In the pulpit was a Dominican friar, with strong features and dark hair, preaching with the crucifix in his hand.

For the first few minutes Baldassarre noted nothing of his preaching. Silent as his entrance had been, some eyes near the doorway had been turned on him with surprise and suspicion. The rope indicated plainly enough that he

was an escaped prisoner, but in that case the church was a sanctuary which he had a right to claim; his advanced years and look of wild misery were fitted to excite pity rather than alarm; and as he stood motionless, with eyes that soon wandered absently from the wide scene before him to the pavement at his feet, those who had observed his entrance presently ceased to regard him, and became absorbed again in the stronger interest of listening to the sermon.

Among the eyes that had been turned toward him were Romola's: she had entered late through one of the side doors and was so placed that she had a full view of the main entrance. She had looked long and attentively at Baldassarre, for grey hairs made a peculiar appeal to her, and the stamp of some unwonted suffering in the face, confirmed by the cord round his neck, stirred in her those sensibilities toward the sorrows of age, which her whole life had tended to develop. She fancied that his eyes had met hers in their first wandering gaze; but Baldassarre had not, in reality, noted her; he had only had a startled consciousness of the general scene, and the consciousness was a mere flash that made no perceptible break in the fierce tumult of emotion which the encounter with Tito had created. Images from the past kept urging themselves upon him like delirious visions strangely blended with thirst and anguish. No distinct thought for the future could shape itself in the midst of that fiery passion: the nearest approach to such thought was the bitter sense of enfeebled powers, and a vague determination to universal distrust and suspicion. Suddenly he felt himself vibrating to loud tones, which seemed like the thundering echo of his own passion. A voice that penetrated his very marrow with its accent of triumphant certitude was saying—"The day of vengeance is at hand!"

Baldassarre quivered and looked up. He was too distant to see more than the general aspect of the preacher standing, with his right arm outstretched, lifting up the crucifix; but he panted for the threatening voice again as if it had been a promise of bliss. There was a pause before the preacher spoke again. He gradually lowered his arm. He deposited the crucifix on the edge of the pulpit, and crossed his arms over his breast, looking round at the multitude as if he would meet the glance of every individual face.

"All ye in Florence are my witnesses, for I spoke not in

a corner. Ye are my witnesses, that four years ago, when there were yet no signs of war and tribulation, I preached the coming of the scourge. I lifted up my voice as a trumpet to the prelates and princes and people of Italy and said, the cup of your iniquity is full. Behold, the thunder of the Lord is gathering, and it shall fall and break the cup, and your iniquity, which seems to you as pleasant wine, shall be poured out upon you, and shall be as molten lead. And you, O priests, who say. Ha, ha! there is no Presence in the sanctuary—the Shechinah is nought—the Mercy-seat is bare: we may sin behind the veil, and who shall punish us? To you, I said, the presence of God shall be revealed in his temple as a consuming fire, and your sacred garments shall become a winding-sheet of flame, and for sweet music there shall be shrieks and hissing, and for soft couches there shall be thorns, and for the breath of wantons shall come the pestilence. Trust not in your gold or silver, trust not in your high fortresses; for, though the walls were of iron, and the fortresses of adamant, the Most High shall put terror into your hearts and weakness into your councils, so that you shall be confounded and flee like women. He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and put others in their stead. For God will no longer endure the pollution of his sanctuary; he will thoroughly purge his Church.

“And forasmuch as it is written that God will do nothing but he revealeth it to his servants the prophets, he has chosen me, his unworthy servant, and made his purpose present to my soul in the living word of the Scriptures, and in the deeds of his providence; and by the ministry of angels he has revealed it to me in visions. And his word possesses me so that I am but as the branch of the forest when the wind of heaven penetrates it, and it is not in me to keep silence, even though I may be a derision to the scorner. And for four years I have preached in obedience to the Divine will: in the face of scoffing I have preached three things, which the Lord has delivered to me: that *in these times God will regenerate his Church*, and that *before the regeneration must come the scourge over all Italy*, and that *these things will come quickly*.

“But hypocrites who cloak their hatred of the truth with a show of love have said to me, ‘Come now, Frate, leave your prophesyings: it is enough to teach virtue.’ To these I answer: ‘Yes, you say in your hearts, God lives afar off, and his word is as a parchment written by dead

men, and he deals not as in the days of old, rebuking the nations, and punishing the oppressors, and smiting the unholy priests as he smote the sons of Eli. But I cry again in your ears: God is near and not afar off; his judgments change not. He is the God of armies; the strong men who go up to battle are his ministers, even as the storm, and fire, and pestilence. He drives them by the breath of his angels, and they come upon the chosen land which has forsaken the covenant. And thou, O Italy, art the chosen land; has not God placed his sanctuary within thee, and thou hast polluted it? Behold, the ministers of his wrath are upon thee—they are at thy very doors!”

Savonarola's voice had been rising in impassioned force up to this point, when he became suddenly silent, let his hands fall and clasped them quietly before him. His silence, instead of being the signal for small movements amongst his audience, seemed to be as strong a spell to them as his voice. Through the vast area of the cathedral men and women sat with faces upturned, like breathing statues, till the voice was heard again in clear low tones.

“Yet there is a pause—even as in the days when Jerusalem was destroyed there was a pause that the children of God might flee from it. There is a stillness before the storm: lo, there is blackness above, but not a leaf quakes: the winds are stayed, that the voice of God's warning might be heard. Hear it now, O Florence, chosen city in the chosen land! Repent and forsake evil: do justice: love mercy: put away all uncleanness from among you, that the spirit of truth and holiness may fill your souls and breathe through all your streets and habitations, and then the pestilence shall not enter, and the sword shall pass over you and leave you unhurt.

“For the sword is hanging from the sky; it is quivering; it is about to fall! *The sword of God upon the earth, swift and sudden!* Did I not tell you, years ago, that I had beheld the vision and heard the voice? And behold, it is fulfilled! Is there not a king with his army at your gates? Does not the earth shake with the tread of horses and the wheels of swift cannon? Is there not a fierce multitude that can lay bare the land with a sharp razor? I tell you the French king with his army is the minister of God: God shall guide him as the hand guides a sharp sickle, and the joints of the wicked shall melt before him, and they shall be mown down as stubble: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them

shall not be delivered. And the tyrants who have made to themselves a throne out of the vices of the multitude, and the unbelieving priests who traffic in the souls of men and fill the very sanctuary with fornication, shall be hurled from their soft couches into burning hell; and the pagans and they who sinned under the old covenant shall stand aloof and say: 'Lo, these men have brought the stench of a new wickedness into the everlasting fire.'

"But thou, O Florence, take the offered mercy. See! the Cross is held out to you: come and be healed. Which among the nations of Italy has had a token like unto yours? The tyrant is driven out from among you: the men who held a bribe in their left hand and a rod in the right are gone forth, and no blood has been spilled. And now put away every other abomination from among you, and you shall be strong in the strength of the living God. Wash yourselves from the black pitch of your vices, which have made you even as the heathens: put away the envy and hatred that have made your city as a nest of wolves. And there shall no harm happen to you: and the passage of armies shall be to you as a flight of birds, and rebellious Pisa shall be given to you again, and famine and pestilence shall be far from your gates, and you shall be as a beacon among the nations. But, mark! while you suffer the accursed thing to lie in the camp you shall be afflicted and tormented, even though a remnant among you may be saved."

These admonitions and promises had been spoken in an incisive tone of authority; but in the next sentence the preacher's voice melted into a strain of entreaty.

"Listen, O people, over whom my heart yearns, as the heart of a mother over the children she has travailed for! God is my witness that but for your sakes I would willingly live as a turtle in the depths of the forest, singing low to my Beloved, who is mine and I am his. For you I toil, for you I languish, for you my nights are spent in watching, and my soul melteth away for very heaviness. O Lord, thou knowest I am willing—I am ready. Take me, stretch me on thy cross: let the wicked who delight in blood, and rob the poor, and defile the temple of their bodies, and harden themselves against thy mercy—let them wag their heads and shoot out the lip at me: let the thorns press upon my brow, and let my sweat be anguish—I desire to be made like Thee in thy great love. But let me see the fruit of my travail—let this people be saved! Let me see

them clothed in purity: let me hear their voices rise in concord as the voices of angels: let them see no wisdom but in thy eternal law, no beauty but in holiness. Then they shall lead the way before the nations, and the people from the four winds shall follow them, and be gathered into the fold of the blessed. For it is thy will, O God, that the earth shall be converted unto thy law: it is thy will that wickedness shall cease and love shall reign. Come, O blessed promise; and behold, I am willing—lay me on the altar: let my blood flow and the fire consume me; but let my witness be remembered among men, that iniquity shall not prosper forever.”*

During the last appeal, Savonarola had stretched out his arms and lifted up his eyes to heaven; his strong voice had alternately trembled with emotion and risen again in renewed energy; but the passion with which he offered himself as a victim became at last too strong to allow of further speech, and he ended in a sob. Every changing tone, vibrating through the audience, shook them into answering emotion. There were plenty among them who had very moderate faith in the Frate's prophetic mission, and who in their cooler moments loved him little; nevertheless, they too were carried along by the great wave of feeling which gathered its force from sympathies that lay deeper than all theory. A loud responding sob rose at once from the wide multitude, while Savonarola had fallen on his knees and buried his face in his mantle. He felt in that moment the rapture and glory of martyrdom without its agony.

In that great sob of the multitude Baldassarre's had mingled. Among all the human beings present, there was perhaps not one whose frame vibrated more strongly than his to the tones and words of the preacher; but it had vibrated like a harp of which all the strings had been wrenched away except one. That threat of a fiery inexorable vengeance—of a future into which the hated sinner might be pursued and held by the avenger in an eternal grapple, had come to him like the promise of an unquenchable fountain to unquenchable thirst. The doctrines of the sages, the old contempt for priestly superstitions, had fallen away from his soul like a forgotten language: if he could have remembered them, what answer could they have given to his great need like the answer given by this

* The sermon here given is not a translation, but a free representation of Fra Girolamo's preaching in its more impassioned moments.

voice of energetic conviction? The thunder of denunciation fell on his passion-wrought nerves with all the force of self-evidence. His thought never went beyond it into questions—he was possessed by it as the war-horse is possessed by the clash of sounds. No word that was not a threat touched his consciousness; he had no fibre to be thrilled by it. But the fierce exultant delight to which he was moved by the idea of perpetual vengeance found at once a climax and a relieving outburst in the preacher's words of self-sacrifice. To Baldassarre those words only brought the vague triumphant sense that he, too, was devoting himself—signing with his own blood the deed by which he gave himself over to an unending fire, that would seem but coolness to his burning hatred.

“I rescued him—I cherished him—if I might clutch his heart-strings forever! Come, O blessed promise! Let my blood flow; let the fire consume me!”

The one chord vibrated to its utmost. Baldassarre clutched his own palms, driving his long nails into them, and burst into a sob with the rest.

CHAPTER XXV.

OUTSIDE THE DUOMO.

WHILE Baldassarre was possessed by the voice of Savonarola, he had not noticed that another man had entered through the doorway behind him, and stood not far off observing him. It was Piero di Cosimo, who took no heed of the preaching, having come solely to look at the escaped prisoner. During the pause, in which the preacher and his audience had given themselves up to inarticulate emotion, the new-comer advanced and touched Baldassarre on the arm. He looked round with the tears still slowly rolling down his face, but with a vigorous sigh, as if he had done with that outburst. The painter spoke to him in a low tone—

“Shall I cut your cords for you? I have heard how you were made prisoner.”

Baldassarre did not reply immediately; he glanced suspiciously at the officious stranger. At last he said, “If you will.”

"Better come outside," said Piero.

Baldassarre again looked at him suspiciously; and Piero partly guessing his thought, smiled, took out a knife and cut the cords. He began to think that the idea of the prisoner's madness was not improbable, there was something so peculiar in the expression of his face. "Well," he thought, "if he does any mischief, he'll soon get tied up again. The poor devil shall have a chance, at least."

"You are afraid of me," he said again, in an undertone; "you don't want to tell me anything about yourself."

Baldassarre was folding his arms in enjoyment of the long-absent muscular sensation. He answered Piero with a less suspicious look and tone which had some quiet decision in it.

"No, I have nothing to tell."

"As you please," said Piero, "but perhaps you want shelter, and may not know how hospitable we Florentines are to visitors with torn doublets and empty stomachs. There's an hospital for poor travelers outside all our gates, and, if you liked, I could put you in the way to one. There's no danger from your French soldier. He has been sent off."

Baldassarre nodded, and turned in silent acceptance of the offer, and he and Piero left the church together.

"You wouldn't like to sit to me for your portrait, should you?" said Piero, as they went along the Via dell Oriuolo, on the way to the gate of Santa Croce. "I am a painter: I would give you money to get your portrait."

The suspicion returned into Baldassarre's glance, as he looked at Piero, and said decidedly, "No."

"Ah!" said the painter, curtly. "Well, go straight on, and you'll find the Porta Santa Croce, and outside it there's an hospital for travelers. So you'll not accept any service from me?"

"I give you thanks for what you have done already. I need no more."

"It is well," said Piero, with a shrug, and they turned away from each other.

"A mysterious old tiger!" thought the artist, "well worth painting. Ugly—with deep lines—looking as if the plough and harrow had gone over his heart. A fine contrast to my bland and smiling Messer Greco—my *Bacco trionfante*, who has married the fair Antigone in contradiction to all history and fitness. Aha! his scholar's blood curdled uncomfortably at the old fellow's clutch!"

When Piero re-entered the Piazza del Duomo the multitude who had been listening to Fra Girolamo were pouring out from all the doors, and the haste they made to go on their several ways was a proof how important they held the preaching which had detained them from the other occupations of the day. The artist leaned against an angle of the Baptistery and watched the departing crowd, delighting in the variety of the garb and of the keen characteristic faces—faces such as Masaccio had painted more than fifty years before: such as Domenico Ghirlandajo had not yet quite left off painting.

This morning was a peculiar occasion, and the Frate's audience, always multifarious, had represented even more completely than usual the various classes and political parties of Florence. There were men of high birth, accustomed to public charges at home and abroad, who had become newly conspicuous not only as enemies of the Medici and friends of popular government, but as thorough Piagnoni, espousing to the utmost the doctrines and practical teaching of the Frate, and frequenting San Marco as the seat of another Samuel: some of them men of authoritative and handsome presence, like Francesco Valori, and perhaps also of a hot and arrogant temper, very much gratified by an immediate divine authority for bringing about freedom in their own way; others, like Soderini, with less of the ardent Piagnone, and more of the wise politician. There were men, also of family, like Piero Capponi, simply brave undoctinal lovers of a sober republican liberty, who preferred fighting to arguing, and had no particular reasons for thinking any ideas false that kept out the Medici and made room for public spirit. At their elbows were doctors of law whose studies of Accursius and his brethren had not so entirely consumed their ardor as to prevent them from becoming enthusiastic Piagnoni: Messer Luca Corsini himself, for example, who on a memorable occasion yet to come was to raise his learned arms in street stone-throwing for the cause of religion, freedom, and the Frate. And among the dignities who carried their black lucco or furred mantle with an air of habitual authority, there was an abundant sprinkling of men with more contemplative and sensitive faces: scholars inheriting such high names as Strozzi and Acciajoli, who were already minded to take the cowl and join the community of San Marco; artists wrought to a new and

higher ambition by the teaching of Savonarola, like that young painter who had lately surpassed himself in his fresco of the divine child on the wall of the Frate's bare cell — unconscious yet that he would one day himself wear the tonsure and the cowl, and be called Fra Bartolommeo. There was the mystic poet Girolamo Benevieni hastening, perhaps, to carry tidings of the beloved Frate's speedy coming to his friend Pico della Mirandola, who was never to see the light of another morning. There were well-born women attired with such scrupulous plainness that their more refined grace was the chief distinction between them and their less aristocratic sisters. There was a predominant proportion of the genuine *popolani* or middle class, belonging both to the Major and Minor Arts, conscious of purses threatened by war-taxes. And more striking and various, perhaps, than all the other classes of the Frate's disciples, there was the long stream of poorer tradesmen and artisans, whose faith and hope in his Divine message varied from the rude and indiscriminating trust in him as the friend of the poor and the enemy of the luxurious oppressive rich, to that eager tasting of all the subtleties of biblical interpretation which takes peculiarly strong hold on the sedentary artisan, illuminating the long dim spaces beyond the board where he stitches, with a pale flame that seems to him the light of Divine science.

But among these various disciples of the Frate were scattered many who were not in the least his disciples. Some were Mediceans who had already, from motives of fear and policy, begun to show the presiding spirit of the popular party a feigned deference. Others were sincere advocates of a free government, but regarded Savonarola simply as an ambitious monk — half sagacious, half fanatical — who had made himself a powerful instrument with the people, and must be accepted as an important social fact. There were even some of his bitter enemies: members of the old aristocratic anti-Medicean party — determined to try and get the reins once more tight in the hands of certain chief families; or else licentious young men, who detested him as the kill-joy of Florence. For the sermons in the Duomo had already become political incidents, attracting the ears of curiosity and malice, as well as of faith. The men of ideas, like young Niccolò Macchiavelli, went to observe and write reports to friends away in country villas; the men of appetites, like Dolfo Spini, bent on hunting down the Frate, as a public nuisance who

made game scarce, went to feed their hatred and lie in wait for grounds of accusation.

Perhaps, while no preacher ever had a more massive influence than Savonarola, no preacher ever had more heterogeneous materials to work upon. And one secret of the massive influence lay in the highly mixed character of his preaching. Baldassarre, wrought into an ecstasy of self-martyring revenge, was only an extreme case among the partial and narrow sympathies of that audience. In Savonarola's preaching there were strains that appealed to the very finest susceptibilities of men's natures, and there were elements that gratified low egoism, tickled gossiping curiosity, and fascinated timorous superstition. His need of personal predominance, his labyrinthine allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures, his enigmatic visions, and his false certitude about the Divine intentions, never ceased, in his own large soul, to be ennobled by that fervid piety, that passionate sense of the infinite, that active sympathy, that clear-sighted demand for the subjection of selfish interests to the general good, which he had in common with the greatest of mankind. But for the mass of his audience all the pregnancy of his preaching lay in his strong assertion of supernatural claims, in his denunciatory visions, in the false certitude which gave his sermons the interest of a political bulletin; and having once held that audience in his mastery, it was necessary to his nature—it was necessary for their welfare—that he should *keep* the mastery. The effect was inevitable. No man ever struggled to retain power over a mixed multitude without suffering vitiation; his standard must be their lower needs and not his own best insight.

The mysteries of human character have seldom been presented in a way more fitted to check the judgments of facile knowingness than in Girolamo Savonarola; but we can give him a reverence that needs no shutting of the eyes to fact, if we regard his life as a drama in which there were great inward modifications accompanying the outward changes. And up to this period, when his more direct action on political affairs had only just begun, it is probable that his imperious need of ascendancy had burned undiscernibly in the strong flame of his zeal for God and man.

It was a fashion of old, when an ox was led out for sacrifice to Jupiter, to chalk the dark spots, and give the offering a false show of unblemished whiteness. Let us

fling away the chalk, and boldly say—the victim is spotted, but it is not therefore in vain that his mighty heart is laid on the altar of men's highest hopes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GARMENT OF FEAR.

AT six o'clock that evening most people in Florence were glad the entrance of the new Charlemagne was fairly over. Doubtless when the roll of drums, the blast of trumpets, and the tramp of horses along the Pisan road began to mingle with the pealing of the excited bells, it was a grand moment for those who were stationed on turrated roofs, and could see the long-winding terrible pomp on the background of the green hills and valley. There was no sunshine to light up the splendor of banners, and spears, and plumes, and silken surcoats, but there was no thick cloud of dust to hide it, and as the picked troops advanced into close view, they could be seen all the more distinctly for the absence of dancing glitter. Tall and tough Scotch archers, Swiss halberdiers fierce and ponderous, nimble Gascons ready to wheel and climb, cavalry in which each man looked like a knight-errant with his indomitable spear and charger—it was satisfactory to be assured that they would injure nobody but the enemies of God! With that confidence at heart it was a less dubious pleasure to look at the array of strength and splendor in nobles and knights, and youthful pages of choice lineage—at the bossed and jeweled sword-hilts, at the satin scarfs embroidered with strange symbolical devices of pious or gallant meaning, at the gold chains and jeweled aigrettes, at the gorgeous horse-trappings and brocaded mantles, and at the transcendent canopy carried by select youths above the head of the Most Christian King. To sum up with an old diarist, whose spelling and diction halted a little behind the wonders of this royal visit,—*“fù gran magnificenza.”*

But for the Signoria, who had been waiting on their platform against the gates, and had to march out at the right moment, with their orator in front of them, to meet the mighty guest, the grandeur of the scene had been

somewhat screened by unpleasant sensations. If Messer Luca Corsini could have had a brief Latin welcome depending from his mouth in legible characters, it would have been less confusing when the rain came on, and created an impatience in men and horses that broke off the delivery of his well-studied periods, and reduced the representatives of the scholarly city to offer a makeshift welcome in impromptu French. But that sudden confusion had created a great opportunity for Tito. As one of the secretaries he was among the officials who were stationed behind the Signoria, and with whom these highest dignities were promiscuously thrown when pressed upon by the horses.

"Somebody step forward and say a few words in French," said Soderini. But no one of high importance chose to risk a second failure. "You, Francesco Gaddi—you can speak." But Gaddi, distrusting his own promptness, hung back, and pushing Tito, said, "You, Melema."

Tito stepped forward in an instant, and, with the air of profound deference that came as naturally to him as walking, said the few needful words in the name of the Signoria; then gave way gracefully, and let the king pass on. His presence of mind, which had failed him in the terrible crisis of the morning, had been a ready instrument this time. It was an excellent livery servant that never forsook him when danger was not visible. But when he was complimented on his opportune service, he laughed it off as a thing of no moment, and to those who had not witnessed it, let Gaddi have the credit of the improvised welcome. No wonder Tito was popular: the touchstone by which men try us is most often their own vanity.

Other things besides the oratorical welcome had turned out rather worse than had been expected. If everything had happened according to ingenious preconceptions, the Florentine procession of clergy and laity would not have found their way choked up and been obliged to take a make-shift course through the back streets, so as to meet the king at the Cathedral only. Also, if the young monarch under the canopy, seated on his charger with his lance upon his thigh, had looked more like a Charlemagne and less like a hastily modeled grotesque, the imagination of his admirers would have been much assisted. It might have been wished that the scourge of Italian wickedness and "Champion of the honor of women" had had a less miserable leg, and only the normal sum of toes; that his

mouth had been of a less reptilian width of slit, his nose and head of a less exorbitant outline. But the thin leg rested on cloth of gold and pearls, and the face was only an interruption of a few square inches in the midst of black velvet and gold, and the blaze of rubies, and the brilliant tints of the embroidered and bepearled canopy,—“*fù gran magnificenza.*”

And the people had cried *Francia, Francia!* with an enthusiasm proportioned to the splendor of the canopy which they had torn to pieces as their spoil, according to immemorial custom; royal lips had duly kissed the altar; and after all mischances the royal person and retinue were lodged in the Palace of the Via Larga, the rest of the nobles and gentry were dispersed among the great houses of Florence, and the terrible soldiery were encamped in the Prato and other open quarters. The business of the day was ended.

But the streets still presented a surprising aspect, such as Florentines had not seen before under the November stars. Instead of a gloom unbroken except by a lamp burning feebly here and there before a saintly image at the street corners, or by a stream of redder light from an open doorway, there were lamps suspended at the windows of all houses, so that men could walk along no less securely and commodiously than by day,—“*fù gran magnificenza.*”

Along these illuminated streets Tito Melema was walking at about eight o'clock in the evening, on his way homeward. He had been exerting himself throughout the day under the pressure of hidden anxieties, and had at last made his escape unnoticed from the midst of after-supper gaiety. Once at leisure thoroughly to face and consider his circumstances, he hoped that he could so adjust himself to them and to all probabilities as to get rid of his childish fear. If he had only not been wanting in the presence of mind necessary to recognize Baldassarre under that surprise!—it would have been happier for him on all accounts; for he still winced under the sense that he was deliberately inflicting suffering on his father: he would very much have preferred that Baldassarre should be prosperous and happy. But he had left himself no second path now: there could be no conflict any longer: the only thing he had to do was to take care of himself.

While these thoughts were in his mind he was advancing from the Piazza di Santa Croce along the Via dei Benci, and as he neared the angle turning into the Borgo Santa

Croce his ear was struck by a music which was not that of evening revelry, but of vigorous labor—the music of the anvil. Tito gave a slight start and quickened his pace, for the sounds had suggested a welcome thought. He knew that they came from the workshop of Niccolò Caparra, famous resort of all Florentines who cared for curious and beautiful iron-work.

“What makes the giant at work so late?” thought Tito. “But so much the better for me. I can do that little bit of business to-night instead of to-morrow morning.”

Preoccupied as he was, he could not help pausing a moment in admiration as he came in front of the workshop. The wide doorway, standing at the truncated angle of a great block or “isle” of houses, was surmounted by a loggia roofed with fluted tiles, and supported by stone columns with roughly carved capitals. Against the red light framed in by the outline of the fluted tiles and columns stood in black relief the grand figure of Niccolò, with his huge arms in rhythmic rise and fall, first hiding and then disclosing the profile of his firm mouth and powerful brow. Two slighter ebony figures, one at the anvil, the other at the bellows, served to set off his supensor massiveness.

Tito darkened the doorway with a very different outline, standing in silence, since it was useless to speak until Niccolò should deign to pause and notice him. That was not until the smith had beaten the head of an ax to the due sharpness of edge and dismissed it from his anvil. But in the meantime Tito had satisfied himself by a glance round the shop that the object of which he was in search had not disappeared.

Niccolò gave an unceremonious but good-humored nod as he turned from the anvil and rested his hammer on his hip.

“What is it, Messer Tito? Business?”

“Assuredly, Niccolò; else I should not have ventured to interrupt you when you are working out of hours, since I take that as a sign that your work is pressing.”

“I’ve been at the same work all day—making axes and spear-heads. And every fool that has passed my shop has put his pumpkin-head in to say, ‘Niccolò, wilt thou not come and see the King of France and his soldiers?’ and I’ve answered, ‘No; I don’t want to see their faces—I want to see their backs.’”

“Are you making arms for the citizens, then, Niccolò,

that they may have something better than rusty scythes and spits in case of an uproar?"

"We shall see. Arms are good, and Florence is likely to want them. The Frate tells us we shall get Pisa again, and I hold with the Frate; but I should be glad to know how the promise is to be fulfilled, if we don't get plenty of good weapons forged? The Frate sees a long way before him; that I believe. But he doesn't see birds caught with winking at them, as some of our people try to make out. He sees sense, and not nonsense. But you're a bit of a Medicean, Messer Tito Melema, Ebbene! so I've been myself in my time, before the cask began to run sour. What's your business?"

"Simply to know the price of that fine coat of mail I saw hanging up here the other day. I want to buy it for a certain personage who needs a protection of that sort under his doublet."

"Let him come and buy it himself, then," said Niccolò, bluntly. "I'm rather nice about what I sell, and whom I sell to. I like to know who's my customer."

"I know your scruples, Niccolò. But that is only defensive armor; it can hurt nobody."

"True; but it may make the man who wears it feel himself all the safer if he should want to hurt somebody. No, no; it's not my own work; but it's fine work of Maso of Brescia; I should be loth for it to cover the heart of a scoundrel. I must know who is to wear it."

"Well, then, to be plain with you, Niccolò mio, I want it myself," said Tito, knowing it was useless to try persuasion. "The fact is, I am likely to have a journey to take—and you know what journeying is in these times. You don't suspect *me* of treason against the Republic?"

"No, I know no harm of you," said Niccolò, in his blunt way again. "But have you the money to pay for the coat? For you've passed my shop often enough to know my sign: you've seen the burning account-books. I trust nobody. The price is twenty florins, and that's because it's second-hand. You're not likely to have so much money with you. Let it be till to-morrow."

"I happen to have the money," said Tito, who had been winning at play the day before, and had not emptied his purse. "I'll carry the armor home with me."

Niccolò reached down the finely-wrought coat, which fell together into little more than two handfuls.

"There, then," he said, when the florins had been told

down on his palm. "Take the coat. It's made to cheat sword, or poniard, or arrow. But, for my part, I would never put such a thing on. It's like carrying fear about with one."

Niccolò's words had an unpleasant intensity of meaning for Tito. But he smiled and said—

"Ah, Niccolò, we scholars are all cowards. Handling the pen doesn't thicken the arm as your hammer-wielding does. Addio!"

He folded the armor under his mantle, and hastened across the Ponte Rubaconte.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE YOUNG WIFE.

WHILE Tito was hastening across the bridge with the new-bought armor under his mantle, Romola was pacing up and down the old library, thinking of him and longing for his return.

It was but a few fair faces that had not looked forth from windows that day to see the entrance of the French king and his nobles. One of the few was Romola's. She had been present at no festivities since her father had died—died quite suddenly in his chair three months before.

"Is not Tito coming to write?" he had said, when the bell had long ago sounded the usual hour in the evening. He had not asked before, from dread of a negative; but Romola had seen by his listening face and restless movements that nothing else was in his mind.

"No, father, he had to go to a supper at the cardinal's: you know he is wanted so much by everyone," she answered, in a tone of gentle excuse.

"Ah! then perhaps he will bring some positive word about the library; the cardinal promised last week," said Bardo, apparently pacified by this hope.

He was silent a little while; then, suddenly flushing, he said—

"I must go on without him, Romola. Get the pen. He has brought me no new text to comment on; but I must say what I want to say about the New Platonists. I shall die and nothing will have been done. Make haste, my Romola."

"I am ready, father," she said, the next minute, holding the pen in her hand.

But there was silence. Romola took no note of this for a little while, accustomed to pauses in dictation; and when at last she looked round inquiringly, there was no change of attitude.

"I am quite ready, father!"

Still Bardo was silent, and his silence was never again broken.

Romola looked back on that hour with some indignation against herself, because even with the first outburst of her sorrow there had mingled the irrepressible thought, "Perhaps my life with Tito will be more perfect now."

For the dream of a triple life with an undivided sum of happiness had not been quite fulfilled. The rainbow-tinted shower of sweets, to have been perfectly typical, should have had some invisible seeds of bitterness mingled with them; the crowned Ariadne, under the snowing roses, had felt more and more the presence of unexpected thorns. It was not Tito's fault, Romola had continually assured herself. He was still all gentleness to her, and to her father also. But it was in the nature of things—she saw it clearly now—it was in the nature of things that no one but herself could go on month after month, and year after year, fulfilling patiently all her father's monotonous exacting demands. Even she, whose sympathy with her father had made all the passion and religion of her young years, had not always been patient, had been inwardly very rebellious. It was true that before their marriage, and even for some time after, Tito had seemed more unwearying than herself; but then, of course, the effort had the ease of novelty. We assume a load with confident readiness, and up to a certain point the growing irksomeness of pressure is tolerable: but at last the desire for relief can no longer be resisted. Romola said to herself that she had been very foolish and ignorant in her girlish time: she was wiser now, and would make no unfair demands on the man to whom she had given her best woman's love and worship. The breath of sadness that still cleaved to her lot while she saw her father month after month sink from elation into new disappointment as Tito gave him less and less of his time, and made bland excuses for not continuing his own share of the joint work—that sadness was no fault of Tito's, she said, but rather of their inevitable destiny. If he stayed less and

less with her, why, that was because they could hardly ever be alone. His caresses were no less tender: if she pleaded timidly on any one evening that he should stay with her father instead of going to another engagement which was not peremptory, he excused himself with such charming gaiety, he seemed to linger about her with such fond playfulness before he could quit her, that she could only feel a little heartache in the midst of her love, and then go to her father and try to soften his vexation and disappointment. But all the while inwardly her imagination was busy trying to see how Tito could be as good as she had thought he was, and yet find it impossible to sacrifice those pleasures of society which were necessarily more vivid to a bright creature like him than to the common run of men. She herself would have liked more gaiety, more admiration: it was true, she gave it up willingly for her father's sake—she would have given up much more than that for the sake even of a slight wish on Tito's part. It was clear that their natures differed widely; but perhaps it was no more than the inherent difference between man and woman, that made her affections more absorbing. If there were any other difference she tried to persuade herself that the inferiority was all on her side. Tito was really kinder than she was, better tempered, less proud and resentful; he had no angry retorts, he met all complaints with perfect sweetness; he only escaped as quietly as he could from things that were unpleasant.

It belongs to every large nature, when it is not under the immediate power of some strong unquestioning emotion, to suspect itself, and doubt the truth of its own impressions, conscious of possibilities beyond its own horizon. And Romola was urged to doubt herself the more by the necessity of interpreting her disappointment in her life with Tito so as to satisfy at once her love and her pride. Disappointed? Yes, there was no other milder word that would tell the truth. Perhaps all women had to suffer the disappointment of ignorant hopes, if she only knew their experience. Still, there had been something peculiar in her lot: her relation to her father had claimed unusual sacrifices from her husband. Tito had once thought that his love would make those sacrifices easy; his love had not been great enough for that. She was not justified in resenting a self-delusion. No! resentment must not rise: all endurance seemed easy to Romola rather than a state of mind in which she would admit to

herself that Tito acted unworthily. If she had felt a new heartache in the solitary hours with her father through the last months of his life, it had been by no inexcusable fault of her husband's; and now—it was a hope that would make its presence felt even in the first moments when her father's place was empty—there was no longer any importunate claim to divide her from Tito; their young lives would flow in one current, and their true marriage would begin.

But the sense of something like guilt toward her father in a hope that grew out of his death, gave all the more force to the anxiety with which she dwelt on the means of fulfilling his supreme wish. That piety toward his memory was all the atonement she could make now for a thought that seemed akin to joy at his loss. The laborious simple life, pure from vulgar corrupting ambitions, embittered by the frustration of the dearest hopes, imprisoned at last in total darkness—a long seed-time without a harvest—was at an end now, and all that remained of it beside the tablet in Sante Croce and the unfinished commentary on Tito's text, was the collection of manuscripts and antiquities, the fruit of half a century's toil and frugality. The fulfillment of her father's life-long ambition about this library was a sacramental obligation for Romola.

The precious relic was safe from creditors, for when the deficit toward their payment had been ascertained, Bernardo del Nero, though he was far from being among the wealthiest Florentines, had advanced the necessary sum of about a thousand florins—a large sum in those days—accepting a lien on the collection as a security.

“The State will repay me,” he had said to Romola, making light of the service, which had really cost him some inconvenience. “If the cardinal finds a building, as he seems to say he will, our Signoria may consent to do the rest. I have no children, I can afford the risk.”

But within the last ten days all hopes in the Medici had come to an end: and the famous Medicean collections in the Via Larga were themselves in danger of dispersion. French agents had already begun to see that such very fine antique gems as Lorenzo had collected belonged by right to the first nation in Europe; and the Florentine State, which had got possession of the Medicean library, was likely to be glad of a customer for it. With a war to recover Pisa hanging over it, and with the certainty of

having to pay large subsidies to the French king, the State was likely to prefer money to manuscripts.

To Romola these grave political changes had gathered their chief interest from their bearing on the fulfilment of her father's wish. She had been brought up in learned seclusion from the interests of actual life, and had been accustomed to think of heroic deeds and great principles as something antithetic to the vulgar present, of the Pynx and the Forum as something more worthy of attention than the councils of living Florentine men. And now the expulsion of the Medici meant little more for her than the extinction of her best hope about her father's library. The times, she knew, were unpleasant for friends of the Medici, like her godfather and Tito: superstitious shopkeepers and the stupid rabble were full of suspicions; but her new keen interest in public events, in the outbreak of war, in the issue of the French king's visit, in the changes that were likely to happen in the State, was kindled solely by the sense of love and duty to her father's memory. All Romola's ardor had been concentrated in her affections. Her share in her father's learned pursuits had been for her little more than a toil which was borne for his sake; and Tito's airy brilliant faculty had no attraction for her that was not merged in the deeper sympathies that belong to young love and trust. Romola had had contact with no mind that could stir the larger possibilities of her nature; they lay folded and crushed like embryonic wings, making no element in her consciousness beyond an occasional vague uneasiness.

But this new personal interest of hers in public affairs had made her care at least to understand precisely what influence Fra Girolamo's preaching was likely to have on the turn of events. Changes in the form of the State were talked of, and all she could learn from Tito, whose secretaryship and serviceable talents carried him into the heart of public business, made her only the more eager to fill out her lonely day by going to hear for herself what it was that was just now leading all Florence by the ears. This morning, for the first time, she had been to hear one of the Advent sermons in the Duomo. When Tito had left her, she had formed a sudden resolution, and after visiting the spot where her father was buried in Santa Croce, had walked on to the Duomo. The memory of that last scene with Dino was still vivid within her whenever she recalled it, but it had receded behind the experience and

anxieties of her married life. The new sensibilities and questions which it had half awakened in her were quieted again by that subjection to her husband's mind which is felt by every wife who loves her husband with passionate devotedness and full reliance. She remembered the effect of Fra Girolamo's voice and presence on her as a ground for expecting that his sermon might move her in spite of his being a narrow-minded monk. But the sermon did no more than slightly deepen her previous impression, that this fanatical preacher of tribulations was after all a man toward whom it might be possible for her to feel personal regard and reverence. The denunciations and exhortations simply arrested her attention. She felt no terror, no pangs of conscience: it was the roll of distant thunder, that seemed grand, but could not shake her. But when she heard Savonarola invoke martyrdom, she sobbed with the rest: she felt herself penetrated with a new sensation—a strange sympathy with something apart from all the definable interests of her life. It was not altogether unlike the thrill which had accompanied certain rare heroic touches in history and poetry; but the resemblance was as that between the memory of music, and the sense of being possessed by actual vibrating harmonies.

But that transient emotion, strong as it was, seemed to lie quite outside the inner chamber and sanctuary of her life. She was not thinking of Fra Girolamo now; she was listening anxiously for the step of her husband. During these three months of their double solitude she had thought of each day as an epoch in which their union might begin to be more perfect. She was conscious of being sometimes a little too sad or too urgent about what concerned her father's memory—a little too critical or coldly silent when Tito narrated the things that were said and done in the world he frequented—a little too hasty in suggesting that by living quite simply as her father had done, they might become rich enough to pay Bernardo del Nero, and reduce the difficulties about the library. It was not possible that Tito could feel so strongly on this last point as she did, and it was asking a great deal from him to give up luxuries for which he really labored. The next time Tito came home she would be careful to suppress all those promptings that seemed to isolate her from him. Romola was laboring, as a loving woman must, to subdue her nature to her husband's. The great need of her heart compelled her to strangle, with desperate resolution, every rising

impulse of suspicion, pride, and resentment; she felt equal to any self-infliction that would save her from ceasing to love. That would have been like the hideous nightmare in which the world had seemed to break away all round her, and leave her feet overhanging the darkness. Romola had never distinctly imagined such a future for herself; she was only beginning to feel the presence of effort in that clinging trust which had once been mere repose.

She waited and listened long, for Tito had not come straight home after leaving Niccolò Caparra, and it was more than two hours after the time when he was crossing the Ponte Rubaconte that Romola heard the great door of the court turning on its hinges, and hastened to the head of the stone steps. There was a lamp hanging over the stairs, and they could see each other distinctly as he ascended. The eighteen months had produced a more definable change in Romola's face than in Tito's; the expression was more subdued, less cold, and more beseeching, and, as the pink flush overspread her face now, in her joy that the long waiting was at an end, she was much lovelier than on the day when Tito had first seen her. On that day, any on-looker would have said that Romola's nature was made to command, and Tito's to bend; yet now Romola's mouth was quivering a little, and there was some timidity in her glance.

He made an effort to smile, as she said—

"My Tito, you are tired; it has been a fatiguing day: is it not true?"

Maso was there, and no more was said until they had crossed the ante-chamber and closed the door of the library behind them. The wood was burning brightly on the great dogs; that was one welcome for Tito, late as he was, and Romola's gentle voice was another.

He just turned and kissed her when she took off his mantle; then he went toward a high-backed chair placed for him near the fire, threw himself into it, and flung away his cap, saying, not peevishly, but in a fatigued tone of remonstrance, as he gave a slight shudder—

"Romola, I wish you would give up sitting in this library. Surely our own rooms are pleasanter in this chill weather."

Romola felt hurt. She had never seen Tito so indifferent in his manner; he was usually full of lively solicitous attention. And she had thought so much of his return to her after the long day's absence! He must be very weary.

"I wonder you have forgotten, Tito," she answered,

looking at him anxiously, as if she wanted to read an excuse for him in the signs of bodily fatigue. "You know I am making the catalogue on the new plan that my father wished for; you have not time to help me, so I must work at it closely."

Tito, instead of meeting Romola's glance, closed his eyes and rubbed his hands over his face and hair. He felt he was behaving unlike himself, but he would make amends to-morrow. The terrible resurrection of secret fears, which, if Romola had known them, would have alienated her from him forever, caused him to feel an alienation already begun between them—caused him to feel a certain repulsion toward a woman from whose mind he was in danger. The feeling had taken hold of him unawares, and he was vexed with himself for behaving in this new cold way to her. He could not suddenly command any affectionate looks or words; he could only exert himself to say what might serve as an excuse.

"I am not well, Romola; you must not be surprised if I am peevish."

"Ah, you have had so much to tire you to-day," said Romola, kneeling down close to him, and laying her arm on his chest while she put his hair back caressingly.

Suddenly she drew her arm away with a start, and a gaze of alarmed inquiry.

"What have you got under your tunic, Tito? Something as hard as iron."

"It is iron—it is chain armor," he said at once. He was prepared for the surprise and the question, and he spoke quietly, as of something that he was not hurried to explain.

"There was some unexpected danger to-day, then?" said Romola, in a tone of conjecture. "You had it lent to you for the procession."

"No; it is my own. I shall be obliged to wear it constantly, for some time."

"What is it that threatens you, my Tito?" said Romola, looking terrified, and clinging to him again.

"Every one is threatened in these times, who is not a rabid enemy of the Medici. Don't look distressed, my Romola—this armor will make me safe against covert attacks."

Tito put his hand on her neck and smiled. This little dialogue about the armor had broken through the new crust, and made a channel for the sweet habit of kindness.

"But my godfather, then," said Romola, "is not he, too, in danger? And he takes no precautions—ought he not? since he must surely be in more danger than you, who have so little influence compared with him."

"It is just because I am less important that I am in more danger," said Tito, readily. "I am suspected constantly of being an envoy. And men like Messer Bernardo are protected by their position and their extensive family connections, which spread among all parties, while I am a Greek that nobody would avenge."

"But, Tito, is it a fear of some particular person, or only a vague sense of danger, that has made you think of wearing this?" Romola was unable to repel the idea of a degrading fear in Tito, which mingled itself with her anxiety.

"I have had special threats," said Tito, "but I must beg you to be silent on the subject, my Romola. I shall consider that you have broken my confidence, if you mention it to your godfather."

"Assuredly I will not mention it," said Romola, blushing, "if you wish it to be a secret. But, dearest Tito," she added, after a moment's pause, in a tone of loving anxiety, "it will make you very wretched."

"What will make me wretched?" he said, with a scarcely perceptible movement across his face, as from some darting sensation.

"This fear—this heavy armor. I can't help shuddering as I feel it under my arm. I could fancy it a story of enchantment—that some malignant fiend had changed your sensitive human skin into a hard shell. It seems so unlike my bright, light-hearted Tito!"

"Then you would rather have your husband exposed to danger, when he leaves you?" said Tito, smiling. "If you don't mind my being poniarded or shot, why need I mind? I will give up the armor—shall I?"

"No, Tito, no. I am fanciful. Do not heed what I have said. But such crimes are surely not common in Florence? I have always heard my father and godfather say so. Have they become frequent lately?"

"It is not unlikely that they will become frequent, with the bitter hatreds that are being bred continually."

Romola was silent for a few moments. She shrank from insisting further on the subject of the armor. She tried to shake it off.

"Tell me what has happened today," she said, in a cheerful tone. "Has all gone off well?"

"Excellently well. First of all, the rain came and put an end to Luca Corsini's oration, which nobody wanted to hear, and a ready-tongued personage—some say it was Gaddi, some say it was Melema, but really it was done so quickly no one knows who it was—had the honor of giving the Christianissimo the briefest possible welcome in bad French."

"Tito, it was you, I know," said Romola, smiling brightly, and kissing him. "How is it you never care about claiming anything? And after that?"

"Oh! after that, there was a shower of armor and jewels, and trappings, such as you saw at the last Florentine *giostra*, only a great deal more of them. There was strutting, and prancing, and confusion, and scrambling, and the people shouted, and the Cristianissimo smiled from ear to ear. And after that there was a great deal of flattery, and eating, and play. I was at Tornabuoni's. I will tell you about it to-morrow."

"Yes, dearest, never mind now. But is there any more hope that things will end peaceably for Florence, that the Republic will not get into fresh troubles?"

Tito gave a shrug. "Florence will have no peace but what it pays well for; that is clear."

Romola's face saddened, but she checked herself, and said, cheerfully, "You would not guess where I went to-day, Tito. I went to the Duomo, to hear Fra Girolamo."

Tito looked startled; he had immediately thought of Baldassarre's entrance into the Duomo; but Romola gave his look another meaning.

"You are surprised, are you not? It was a sudden thought. I want to know all about the public affairs now, and I determined to hear for myself what the Frate promised the people about this French invasion."

"Well, and what did you think of the prophet?"

"He certainly has a very mysterious power, that man. A great deal of his sermon was what I expected; but once I was strangely moved—I sobbed with the rest."

"Take care, Romola," said Tito, playfully, feeling relieved that she had said nothing about Baldassarre; "you have a touch of fanaticism in you. I shall have you seeing visions, like your brother."

"No; it was the same with every one else. He carried them all with him; unless it were that gross Dolfo Spini,

whom I saw there making grimaces. There was even a wretched-looking man, with a rope round his neck—an escaped prisoner, I should think, who had run in for shelter—a very wild-eyed old man: I saw him with great tears rolling down his cheeks, as he looked and listened quite eagerly.”

There was a slight pause before Tito spoke.

“I saw the man,” he said,—“the prisoner. I was outside the Duomo with Lorenzo Tornabuoni when he ran in. He had escaped from a French soldier. Did you see him when you came out?”

“No, he went out with our good old Piero di Cosimo. I saw Piero come in and cut off his rope, and take him out of the church. But you want rest, Tito? You feel ill?”

“Yes,” said Tito, rising. The horrible sense that he must live in continual dread of what Baldassarre had said or done pressed upon him like a cold weight.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PAINTED RECORD.

FOUR days later, Romola was on her way to the house of Piero di Cosimo, in the Via Golfonda. Some of the streets through which she had to pass were lined with Frenchmen who were gazing at Florence, and with Florentines who were gazing at the French, and the gaze was not on either side entirely friendly and admiring. The first nation in Europe, of necessity finding itself, when out of its own country, in the presence of general inferiority, naturally assumed an air of conscious pre-eminence; and the Florentines, who had taken such pains to play the host amiably, were getting into the worst humor with their too superior guests.

For after the first smiling compliments and festivities were over—after wondrous mysteries with unrivaled machinery of floating clouds and angels had been presented in churches—after the royal guest had honored Florentine dames with much of his Most Christian ogling at balls and suppers, and business had begun to be talked of—it appeared that the new Charlemagne regarded Florence as a

conquered city, inasmuch as he had entered it with his lance at rest, talked of leaving his viceroy behind him, and had thoughts of bringing back the Medici. Singular logic this appeared to be, on the part of an elect instrument of God! since the policy of Piero de Medici, disowned by the people, had been the only offense of Florence against the majesty of France. And Florence was determined not to submit. The determination was being expressed very strongly in consultations of citizens inside the Old Palace, and it was beginning to show itself on the broad flags of the streets and piazza wherever there was an opportunity of flouting an insolent Frenchman. Under these circumstances the streets were not altogether a pleasant promenade for well-born women; but Romola, shrouded in her black veil and mantle, and with old Maso by her side, felt secure enough from impertinent observation.

And she was impatient to visit Piero di Cosimo. A copy of her father's portrait as *Œdipus*, which he had long ago undertaken to make for her, was not yet finished; and Piero was so uncertain in his work—sometimes, when the demand was not peremptory, laying aside a picture for months; sometimes thrusting it into a corner or coffer, where it was likely to be utterly forgotten—that she felt it necessary to watch over his progress. She was a favorite with the painter, and he was inclined to fulfil any wish of hers, but no general inclination could be trusted as a safeguard against his sudden whims. He had told her the week before that the picture would perhaps be finished by this time; and Romola was nervously anxious to have in her possession a copy of the only portrait existing of her father in the days of his blindness, lest his image should grow dim in her mind. The sense of defect in her devotedness to him made her cling with all the force of compunction as well as affection to the duties of memory. Love does not aim simply at the conscious good of the beloved object: it is not satisfied without perfect loyalty of heart; it aims at its own completeness.

Romola, by special favor, was allowed to intrude upon the painter without previous notice. She lifted the iron slide and called Piero in a flute-like tone, as the little maiden with the eggs had done in Tito's presence. Piero was quick in answering, but when he opened the door he accounted for his quickness in a manner that was not complimentary.

"Ah, Madonna Romola, is it you? I thought my eggs were come; I wanted them."

"I have brought you something better than hard eggs, Piero. Maso has got a little basket full of cakes and *confetti* for you," said Romola, smiling, as she put back her veil. She took the basket from Maso, and stepping into the house said —

"I know you like these things when you can have them without trouble. Confess you do."

"Yes, when they come to me as easily as the light does," said Piero, folding his arms and looking down at the sweetmeats as Romola uncovered them and glanced at him archly. "And they are come along with the light now," he added, lifting his eyes to her face and hair with a painter's admiration, as her hood, dragged by the weight of her veil, fell backward.

"But I know what the sweetmeats are for," he went on; "they are to stop my mouth while you scold me. Well, go on into the next room, and you will see I've done something to the picture since you saw it, though it's not finished yet. But I didn't promise, you know: I take care not to promise:

'Chi promette e non mantiene
L'anima sua non va mai bene.'"

The door opening on the wild garden was closed now, and the painter was at work. Not at Romola's picture, however. That was standing on the floor, propped against the wall, and Piero stooped to lift it, that he might carry it into the proper light. But in lifting away this picture, he had disclosed another — the oil-sketch of Tito, to which he had made an important addition within the last few days. It was so much smaller than the other picture, that it stood far-within it, and Piero, apt to forget where he had placed anything, was not aware of what he had revealed, as, peering at some detail in the painting which he held in his hands, he went to place it on an easel. But Romola exclaimed, flushing with astonishment —

"That is Tito!"

Piero looked round, and gave a silent shrug. He was vexed at his own forgetfulness.

She was still looking at the sketch in astonishment; but presently she turned toward the painter, and said with puzzled alarm —

"What a strange picture! When did you paint it? What does it mean?"

"A mere fancy of mine," said Piero, lifting off his skull-cap, scratching his head, and making the usual grimace by which he avoided the betrayal of any feeling. "I wanted a handsome young face for it, and your husband's was just the thing."

He went forward, stooped down to the picture, and lifting it away with its back to Romola, pretended to be giving it a passing examination, before putting it aside as a thing not good enough to show.

But Romola, who had the fact of the armor in her mind, and was penetrated by this strange coincidence of things which associated Tito with the idea of fear, went to his elbow and said—

"Don't put it away; let me look again. That man with the rope round his neck—I saw him—I saw you come to him in the Duomo. What was it that made you put him into a picture with Tito?"

Piero saw no better resource than to tell part of the truth.

"It was a mere accident. The man was running away—running up the steps, and caught hold of your husband; I suppose he had stumbled. I happened to be there, and saw it, and I thought the savage-looking old fellow was a good subject. But it's worth nothing—it's only a freakish daub of mine." Piero ended contemptuously, moving the sketch away with an air of decision, and putting it on a high-shelf. "Come and look at the *Œdipus*."

He had shown a little too much anxiety in putting the sketch out of her sight, and had produced the very impression he had sought to prevent—that there was really something unpleasant, something disadvantageous to Tito, in the circumstances out of which the picture arose. But this impression silenced her: her pride and delicacy shrank from questioning further, where questions might seem to imply that she could entertain even a slight suspicion against her husband. She merely said, in as quiet a tone as she could—

"He was a strange piteous-looking man, that prisoner, Do you know anything more of him?"

"No more: I showed him the way to the hospital, that's all. See, now, the face of *Œdipus* is pretty nearly finished: tell me what you think of it."

Romola now gave her whole attention to her father's portrait, standing in long silence before it.

"Ah," she said at last, "you have done what I wanted.

You have given it more of the listening look. My good Piero"—she turned toward him with bright moist eyes—"I am very grateful to you."

"Now that's what I can't bear in you women," said Piero, turning impatiently, and kicking aside the objects that littered the floor—"you are always pouring out feelings where there's no call for them. Why should you be grateful to me for a picture you pay me for, especially when I make you wait for it? And if I paint a picture, I suppose it's for my own pleasure and credit to paint it well, eh? Are you to thank a man for not being a rogue or a noodle? It's enough if he himself thanks Messer Dorneddio, who has made him neither the one nor the other. But women think walls are held together with honey."

"You crusty Piero! I forgot how snappish you are. Here, put this nice sweetmeat in your mouth," said Romola, smiling through her tears, and taking something very crisp and sweet from the little basket.

Piero accepted it very much as that proverbial bear that dreams of pears might accept an exceedingly mellow "swan-egg"—really liking the gift, but accustomed to have his pleasures and pains concealed under a shaggy coat.

"It's good, Madonna Antigone," said Piero, putting his fingers in the basket for another. He had eaten nothing but hard eggs for a fortnight. Romola stood opposite him, feeling her new anxiety suspended for a little while by the sight of this *naïve* enjoyment.

"Good-bye, Piero," she said, presently, setting down the basket. "I promise not to thank you if you finish the portrait soon and well. I will tell you, you were bound to do it for your own credit."

"Good," said Piero, curtly, helping her with much deftness to fold her mantle and veil round her.

"I'm glad she asked no more questions about that sketch," he thought, when he had closed the door behind her. "I should be sorry for her to guess that I thought her fine husband a good model for a coward. But I made light of it; she'll not think of it again."

Piero was too sanguine, as open-hearted men are apt to be when they attempt a little clever simulation. The thought of the picture pressed more and more on Romola as she walked homeward. She could not help putting together the two facts of the chain-armor and the encounter mentioned by Piero between her husband and the

prisoner, which had happened on the morning of the day when the armor was adopted. That look of terror which the painter had given Tito, had he seen it? What could it all mean?

"It means nothing," she tried to assure herself. "It was a mere coincidence. Shall I ask Tito about it?" Her mind said at last, "No: I will not question him about anything he did not tell me spontaneously. It is an offence against the trust I owe him." Her heart said, "I dare not ask him."

There was a terrible flaw in the trust: she was afraid of any hasty movement, as men are who hold something precious and want to believe that it is not broken.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A MOMENT OF TRIUMPH.

"THE old fellow has vanished; went on toward Arezzo the next morning; not liking the smell of the French, I suppose, after being their prisoner. I went to the hospital to inquire after him; I wanted to know if those broth-making monks had found out whether he was in his right mind or not. However, they said he showed no signs of madness—only took no notice of questions, and seemed to be planting a vine twenty miles off. He was a mysterious old tiger. I should have liked to know something more about him."

It was in Nello's shop that Piero di Cosimo was speaking, on the twenty-fourth of November, just a week after the entrance of the French. There was a party of six or seven assembled at the rather unusual hour of three in the afternoon; for it was a day on which all Florence was excited by the prospect of some decisive political event. Every lounging-place was full, and every shopkeeper who had no wife or deputy to leave in charge, stood at his door with his thumbs in his belt; while the streets were constantly sprinkled with artisans pausing or passing lazily like floating splinters, ready to rush forward impetuously if any object attracted them.

Nello had been thrumming the lute as he half sat on the board against the shop-window, and kept an outlook toward the piazza.

"Ah," he said, laying down the lute, with emphasis, "I would not for a gold florin have missed that sight of the French soldiers waddling in their broad shoes after their runaway prisoners! That comes of leaving my shop to shave magnificent chins. It is always so: if ever I quit this navel of the earth something takes the opportunity of happening in my piazza."

"Yes, you ought to have been there, said Piero, in his biting way, "just to see your favorite Greek look as frightened as if Satanasso had laid hold of him. I like to see your ready-smiling Messeri caught in a sudden wind and obliged to show their lining in spite of themselves. What color do you think a man's liver is, who looks like a bleached deer as soon as a chance stranger lays hold of him suddenly?"

"Piero, keep that vinegar of thine as sauce to thine own eggs! What is it against my *bel erudito* that he looked startled when he felt a pair of claws upon him and saw an unchained madman at his elbow? Your scholar is not like those beastly Swiss and Germans, whose heads are only fit for battering-rams, and who have such large appetites that they think nothing of taking a cannon-ball before breakfast. We Florentines count some other qualities in a man besides that vulgar stuff called bravery, which is to be got by hiring dunderheads at so much per dozen. I tell you, as soon as men found out that they had more brains than oxen, they set the oxen to draw for them; and when we Florentines found out that we had more brains than other men we set them to fight for us."

"Treason, Nello!" a voice called out from the inner sanctum; "that is not the doctrine of the State. Florence is grinding its weapons; and the last well-authenticated vision announced by the Frate was Mars standing on the Palazzo Vecchio with his arm on the shoulder of San-Giovanni Battista, who was offering him a piece of honeycomb."

"It is well, Francesco," said Nello. "Florence has a few thicker skulls than may do to Bombard Pisa with; there will still be the finer spirits left at home to do the thinking and the shaving. And as for our Piero, here, if he makes such a point of valor, let him carry his biggest brush for a weapon and his palette for a shield, and challenge the widest-mouthed Swiss he can see in the Prato to a single combat."

"Va, Nello," growled Piero, "thy tongue runs on as

usual, like a mill when the Arno's full—whether there's grist or not."

"Excellent grist, I tell thee. For it would be as reasonable to expect a grizzled painter like thee to be fond of getting a javelin inside thee as to expect a man whose wits have been sharpened on the classics to like having his handsome face clawed by a wild beast."

"There you go, supposing you will get people to put their legs into a sack because you call it a pair of hosen," said Piero. "Who said anything about a wild beast, or about an unarmed man rushing on battle? Fighting is a trade, and it's not my trade. I should be a fool to run after danger, but I could face it if it came to me."

"How is it you're so afraid of the thunder, then, my Piero?" said Nello, determined to chase down the accuser. "You ought to be able to understand why one man is shaken by a thing that seems a trifle to others—you who hide yourself with the rats as soon as a storm comes on."

"That is because I have a particular sensibility to loud sounds; it has nothing to do with my courage or my conscience."

"Well, and Tito Melema may have a peculiar sensibility to being laid hold of unexpectedly by prisoners who have run away from French soldiers. Men are born with antipathies; I myself can't abide the smell of mint. Tito was born with an antipathy to old prisoners who stumble and clutch. Ecco!"

There was a general laugh at Nello's defence, and it was clear that Piero's disinclination toward Tito was not shared by the company. The painter, with his undecipherable grimace, took the tow from his scarsella and stuffed his ears in indignant contempt, while Nello went on triumphantly—

"No, my Piero, I can't afford to have my *bel erudito* decried; and Florence can't afford it either, with her scholars moulting off her at the early age of forty. Our Phoenix Pico, just gone straight to Paradise, as the Frate has informed us; and the incomparable Poliziano, not two months since, gone to——well, well, let us hope he is not gone to the eminent scholars in the Malebolge."

"By the way," said Francesco Cei, "have you heard that Camilla Rucillai has outdone the Frate in her prophecies? She prophesied two years ago that Pico would die in the time of lilies. He has died in November. 'Not at all the time of lilies,' said the scorners. 'Go to!' says

Camilla; 'it is the lilies of France I meant, and it seems to me they are close enough under your nostrils.' I say, 'Euge, Camilla!' If the Frate can prove that any one of his visions has been as well fulfilled, I'll declare myself a Piagnone to-morrow."

"You are something too flippant about the Frate, Francesco," said Pietro Cennini, the scholarly. "We are all indebted to him in these weeks for preaching peace and quietness, and the laying aside of party quarrels. They are men of small discernment who would be glad to see the people slipping the Frate's leash just now. And if the Most Christian King is obstinate about the treaty to-day, and will not sign what is fair and honorable to Florence, Fra Girolamo is the man we must trust in to bring him to reason."

"You speak truth, Messer Pietro," said Nello: "the Frate is one of the firmest nails Florence has to hang on—at least, that is the opinion of the most respectable chins I have the honor of shaving. But young Messer Niccolò was saying here the other morning—and doubtless Francesco means the same thing—there is as wonderful a power of stretching in the meaning of visions as in Dido's bull's hide. It seems to me a dream may mean whatever comes after it. As our Franco Sacchetti says, a woman dreams over night of a serpent biting her, breaks a drinking-cup the next day, and cries out, 'Look you, I thought something would happen—it's plain now what the serpent meant.'"

"But the Frate's visions are not of that sort," said Cronaca. "He not only says what will happen—that the Church will be scourged and renovated, and the heathens converted—he says it shall happen quickly. He is no slippery pretender who provides loop-holes for himself, he is——"

"What is this? what is this? exclaimed Nello, jumping off the board, and putting his head out at the door. "Here are people streaming into the piazza, and shouting. Something must have happened in the Via Larga. Aha!" he burst forth, with delighted astonishment, stepping out laughing and waving his cap.

All the rest of the company hastened to the door. News from the Via Larga was just what they had been waiting for. But if the news had come into the piazza, they were not a little surprised at the form of its advent. Carried above the shoulders of the people, on a bench apparently

snatched up in the street, sat Tito Melema, in smiling amusement at the compulsion he was under. His cap had slipped off his head, and hung by the *becchetto* which was wound loosely round his neck; and as he saw the group at Nello's door, he lifted up his fingers in beckoning recognition. The next minute he had leaped from the bench on to a cart filled with bales, that stood in the broad space between the Baptistery and the steps of the Duomo, while the people swarmed round him with the noisy eagerness of poultry expecting to be fed. But there was silence when he began to speak in his clear mellow voice—

“Citizens of Florence! I have no warrant to tell the news except your will. But the news is good, and will harm no man in the telling. The Most Christian King is signing a treaty that is honorable to Florence. But you owe it to one of your citizens, who spoke a word worthy of the ancient Romans—you owe it to Piero Capponi!”

Immediately there was a roar of voices.

“Capponi! Capponi! What said our Piero?” “Ah! he wouldn't stand being sent from Herod to Pilate!” “We knew Piero!” “*Orsù!* Tell us, what did he say?”

When the roar of insistance had subsided a little, Tito began again—

“The Most Christian King demanded a little too much—was obstinate—said at last, ‘I shall order my trumpets to sound.’ Then, Florentine citizens! your Piero Capponi, speaking with the voice of a free city, said, ‘If you sound your trumpets, we will ring our bells!’ He snatched the copy of the dishonoring conditions from the hands of the secretary, tore it in pieces, and turned to leave the royal presence.”

Again there were loud shouts—and again impatient demands for more.

“Then, Florentines, the high majesty of France felt, perhaps for the first time, all the majesty of a free city. And the Most Christian King himself hastened from his piace to call Piero Capponi back. The great spirit of your Florentine city did its work by a great word, without need of the great actions that lay ready behind it. And the King has consented to sign the treaty, which preserves the honor, as well as the safety, of Florence. The banner of France will float over every Florentine galley in sign of amity and common privilege, but above that banner will be written the word ‘Liberty!’”

“That is all the news I have to tell: is it not enough?—

since it is for the glory of every one of you, citizens of Florence, that you have a fellow-citizen who knows how to speak your will."

As the shouts rose again, Tito looked round with inward amusement at the various crowd, each of whom was elated with the notion that Piero Capponi had somehow represented him—that he was the mind of which Capponi was the mouthpiece. He enjoyed the humor of the incident, which had suddenly transformed him, an alien, and a friend of the Medici, into an orator who tickled the ears of the people blatant for some unknown good which they called liberty. He felt quite glad that he had been laid hold of and hurried along by the crowd as he was coming out of the palace in the Via Larga with a commission to the Signoria. It was very easy, very pleasant, this exercise of speaking to the general satisfaction: a man who knew how to persuade need never be in danger from any party; he could convince each that he was feigning with all the others. The gestures and faces of weavers and dyers were certainly amusing when looked at from above in this way.

Tito was beginning to get easier in his armor, and at this moment was quite unconscious of it. He stood with one hand holding his recovered cap, and with the other at his belt, the light of a complacent smile in his long lustrous eyes, as he made a parting reverence to his audience, before springing down from the bales—when suddenly his glance met that of a man who had not at all the amusing aspect of the exulting weavers, dyers, and wool-carders. The face of this man was clean-shaven, his hair close-clipped, and he wore a decent felt hat. A single glance would hardly have sufficed to assure any one but Tito that this was the face of the escaped prisoner, who had laid hold of him on the steps. But to Tito it came not simply as the face of the escaped prisoner, but as a face with which he had been familiar long years before.

It seemed all compressed into a second—the sight of Baldassarre looking at him, the sensation shooting through him like a fiery arrow, and the act of leaping from the cart. He would have leaped down in the same instant, whether he had seen Baldassarre or not, for he was in a hurry to be gone to the Palazzo Vecchio: this time he had not betrayed himself by look or movement, and he said inwardly that he could not be taken by surprise again; he should be prepared to see this face rise up continually like the intermittent blotch that comes in diseased vision. But

this reappearance of Baldassarre so much more in his own likeness tightened the pressure of dread: the idea of his madness lost its likelihood now he was shaven and clad like a decent though poor citizen. Certainly there was a great change in his face; but how could it be otherwise? and yet, if he were perfectly sane—in possession of all his powers and all his learning, why was he lingering in this way before making known his identity? It must be for the sake of making his scheme of vengeance more complete. But he did linger: that at least gave an opportunity for flight. And Tito began to think that flight was his only resource.

But while he, with his back turned on the Piazza del Duomo, had lost the recollection of the new part he had been playing, and was no longer thinking of the many things which a ready brain and tongue made easy, but of a few things which destiny had somehow made very difficult, the enthusiasm which he had fed contemptuously was creating a scene in that piazza in grand contrast with the inward drama of self-centred fear which he had carried away from it.

The crowd, on Tito's disappearance, had begun to turn their faces toward the outlets of the piazza in the direction of the Via Larga, when the sight of *mazzieri*, or mace-bearers, entering from the Via de Martelli, announced the approach of dignitaries. They must be the syndics, or commissioners charged with the affecting of the treaty; the treaty must be already signed, and they had come away from the royal presence. Piero Capponi was coming—the brave heart that had known how to speak for Florence. The effect on the crowd was remarkable; they parted with softening, dropping voices, subsiding into silence,—and the silence became so perfect that the tread of the syndics on the broad pavement, and the rustle of their black silk garments, could be heard, like rain in the night. There were four of them; but it was not the two learned doctors of law, Messer Guidantonio Vespucci and Messer Domenico Bonsi, that the crowd waited for; it was not Francesco Valori, popular as he had become in these late days. The moment belonged to another man, of firm presence, as little inclined to humor the people as to humor any other unreasonable claimants—loving order, like one who by force of fortune had been made a merchant, and by force of nature had become a soldier. It was not till he was seen at the entrance of the piazza that the silence was

broken, and then one loud shout of "Capponi, Copponi! Well done, Caponni!" rang through the piazza.

The simple, resolute man looked round him with grave joy. His fellow-citizens gave him a great funeral two years later, when he had died in fight; there were torches carried by all the magistracy, and torches again, and trains of banners. But it was not known that he felt any joy in the oration that was delivered in his praise, as the banners waved over his bier. Let us be glad that he got some thanks and praise while he lived.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE AVENGER'S SECRET.

It was the first time that Baldassarre had been in the Piazza del Duomo since his escape. He had a strong desire to hear the remarkable monk preach again, but he had shrunk from reappearing in the same spot where he had been seen half naked, with neglected hair, with a rope round his neck—in the same spot where he had been called a madman. The feeling, in its freshness, was too strong to be overcome by any trust he had in the change he had made in his appearance; for when the words, "*some madman surely*," had fallen from Tito's lips, it was not their baseness and cruelty only that had made their viper sting—it was Baldassarre's instantaneous bitter consciousness that he might be unable to prove the words false. Along with the passionate desire for vengeance which possessed him had arisen the keen sense that his power of achieving the vengeance was doubtful. It was as if Tito had been helped by some diabolical prompter, who had whispered Baldassarre's saddest secret in the traitor's ear. He was not mad; for he carried within him that piteous stamp of sanity, the clear consciousness of shattered faculties; he measured his own feebleness. With the first movement of vindictive rage awoke a vague caution, like that of a wild beast that is fierce but feeble—or like that of an insect whose little fragment of earth has given way, and made it pause in a palsy of distrust. It was this distrust, this determination to take no step which might betray anything concerning himself, that had made Baldassarre reject Piero di Cosimo's friendly advances.

He had been equally cautious at the hospital, only telling, in answer to the questions of the brethren there, that he had been made a prisoner by the French on his way from Genoa. But his age, and the indications in his speech and manner that he was of a different class from the ordinary mendicants and poor travellers who were entertained in the hospital, had induced the monks to offer him extra charity: a coarse woollen tunic to protect him from the cold, a pair of peasant's shoes, and a few *danari*, smallest of Florentine coins, to help him on his way. He had gone on the road to Arezzo early in the morning; but he had paused at the first little town, and had used a couple of his *danari* to get himself shaved, and to have his circle of hair clipped short, in his former fashion. The barber there had a little hand-mirror of bright steel: it was a long while, it was years, since Baldassarre had looked at himself, and now, as his eyes fell on that hand-mirror, a new thought shot through his mind. "Was he so changed that Tito really did not know him?" The thought was such a sudden arrest of impetuous currents, that it was a painful shock to him; his hands shook like a leaf, as he put away the barber's arm and asked for the mirror. He wished to see himself before he was shaved. The barber, noticing his tremulousness, held the mirror for him.

No, he was not so changed as that. He himself had known the wrinkles as they had been three years ago; they were only deeper now: there was the same rough, clumsy skin, making little superficial bosses on the brow, like so many cipher-marks; the skin was only yellower, only looked more like a lifeless rind. That shaggy white beard—it was no disguise to eyes that had looked closely at him for sixteen years—to eyes that ought to have searched for him with the expectation of finding him changed, as men search for the beloved among the bodies cast up by the waters. There was something different in his glance, but it was a difference that should only have made the recognition of him the more startling; for is not a known voice all the more thrilling when it is heard as a cry? But the doubt was folly: he had felt that Tito knew him. He put out his hand and pushed the mirror away. The strong currents were rushing on again, and the energies of hatred and vengeance were active once more.

He went back on the way toward Florence again, but he did not wish to enter the city till dusk; so he turned aside

from the highroad, and sat down by a little pool shadowed on one side by alder-bushes still sprinkled with yellow leaves. It was a calm November day, and he no sooner saw the pool than he thought its still surface might be a mirror for him. He wanted to contemplate himself slowly, as he had not dared to do in the presence of the barber. He sat down on the edge of the pool, and bent forward to look earnestly at the image of himself.

Was there something wandering and imbecile in his face—something like what he felt in his mind?

Not now; not when he was examining himself with a look of eager inquiry: on the contrary, there was an intense purpose in his eyes. But at other times? Yes, it must be so: in the long hours when he had the vague aching of an unremembered past in him—when he seemed to sit in dark loneliness, visited by whispers which died out mockingly as he strained his ear after them, and by forms that seemed to approach him and float away as he thrust out his hand to grasp them—in those hours, doubtless, there must be continual frustration and amazement in his glance. And more horrible still, when the thick cloud parted for a moment, and, as he sprang forward with hope, rolled together again, and left him helpless as before; doubtless, there was then a blank confusion in his face, as of a man suddenly smitten with blindness.

Could he prove anything? Could he even begin to allege anything, with the confidence that the links of thought would not break away? Would any believe that he had ever had a mind filled with rare knowledge, busy with close thoughts, ready with various speech? It had all slipped away from him—that laboriously-gathered store. Was it utterly and forever gone from him, like the waters from an urn lost in the wide ocean? Or, was it still within him, imprisoned by some obstruction that might one day break asunder?

It might be so; he tried to keep his grasp on that hope. For, since the day when he had first walked feebly from his couch of straw, and had felt a new darkness within him under the sunlight, his mind had undergone changes, partly gradual and persistent, partly sudden and fleeting. As he had recovered his strength of body, he had recovered his self-command and the energy of his will; he had recovered the memory of all that part of his life which was closely enwrought with his emotions; and he had felt more and more constantly and painfully the uneasy sense of lost

knowledge. But more than that — once or twice, when he had been strongly excited, he had seemed momentarily to be in entire possession of his past self, as old men doze for an instant and get back the consciousness of their youth. He seemed again to see Greek pages and understand them, again to feel his mind moving unbenumbed among familiar ideas. It had been but a flash, and the darkness closing in again seemed the more horrible; but might not the same thing happen again for longer periods? If it would only come and stay long enough for him to achieve a revenge — devise an exquisite suffering, such as a mere right arm could never inflict!

He raised himself from his stooping attitude, and, folding his arms, attempted to concentrate all his mental force on the plan he must immediately pursue. He had to wait for knowledge and opportunity, and while he waited he must have the means of living without beggary. What he dreaded of all things now was, that any one should think him a foolish, helpless old man. No one must know that half his memory was gone; the lost strength might come again; and if it were only for a little while, *that* might be enough.

He knew how to begin to get the information he wanted about Tito. He repeated the words "Bratti Ferravecchi" so constantly after they had been uttered to him, that they never slipped from him for long together. A man at Genoa, on whose finger he had seen Tito's ring, had told him that he bought that ring at Florence, of a young Greek, well dressed, and with a handsome dark face, in the shop of a *rigattiere* called Bratti Ferravecchi, in the street also called Ferravecchi. This discovery had caused a violent agitation in Baldassarre. Until then he had clung with all the tenacity of his fervent nature to his faith in Tito, and had not for a moment believed himself to be wilfully forsaken. At first he had said, "My bit of parchment has never reached him; that is why I am still toiling at Antioch. But he is searching; he knows where I was lost: he will trace me out, and find me at last." Then, when he was taken to Corinth, he induced his owners, by the assurance that he should be sought out and ransomed, to provide securely against the failure of any inquiries that might be made about him at Antioch; and at Corinth he thought joyfully, "Here, at last, he must find me. Here he is sure to touch, whichever way he goes." But before another year had passed, the illness had come from which

he had risen with body and mind so shattered that he was worse than worthless to his owners, except for the sake of the ransom that did not come. Then, as he sat helpless in the morning sunlight, he began to think, "Tito has been drowned, or they had made *him* a prisoner too. I shall see him no more. He set out after me, but misfortune overtook him. I shall see his face no more." Sitting in his new feebleness and despair, supporting his head between his hands, with blank eyes and lips that moved uncertainly, he looked so much like a hopelessly imbecile old man, that his owners were contented to be rid of him, and allowed a Genoese merchant, who had compassion on him as an Italian, to take him on board his galley. In a voyage of many months in the Archipelago and along the seaboard of Asia Minor, Baldassarre had recovered his bodily strength, but on landing at Genoa he had so weary a sense of his desolateness that he almost wished he had died of that illness at Corinth. There was just one possibility that hindered the wish from being decided: it was that Tito might not be dead, but living in a state of imprisonment or destitution; and if he lived, there was still a hope for Baldassarre—faint, perhaps, and likely to be long deferred, but still a hope, that he might find his child, his cherished son again; might yet again clasp hands and meet face to face with the one being who remembered him as he had been before his mind was broken.

In this state of feeling he had chanced to meet the stranger who wore Tito's onyx ring, and though Baldassarre would have been unable to describe the ring beforehand, the sight of it stirred the dormant fibres, and he recognized it. That Tito nearly a year after his father had been parted from him should have been living in apparent prosperity at Florence, selling the gem which he ought not to have sold till the last extremity, was a fact that Baldassarre shrank from trying to account for: he was glad to be stunned and bewildered by it, rather than to have any distinct thought; he tried to feel nothing but joy that he should behold Tito again. Perhaps Tito had thought that his father was dead; somehow the mystery would be explained. "But at least I shall meet eyes that will remember me. I am not alone in the world."

And now again Baldassarre said, "I am not alone in the world; I shall never be alone, for my revenge is with me."

It was as the instrument of that revenge, as something

merely external and subservient to his true life, that he bent down again to examine himself with hard curiosity—not, he thought, because he had any care for a withered, forsaken old man, whom nobody loved, whose soul was like a deserted home, where the ashes were cold upon the hearth, and the walls were bare of all but the marks of what had been. It is in the nature of all human passion, the lowest as well as the highest, that there is a point where it ceases to be properly egoistic, and is like a fire kindled within our being to which everything else in us is mere fuel.

He looked at the pale, black-browed image in the water till he identified it with that self from which his revenge seemed to be a thing apart; and he felt as if the image, too, heard the silent language of his thought.

“I was a loving fool—I worshipped a woman once, and believed she could care for me; and then I took a helpless child and fostered him; and I watched him as he grew, to see if he would care for me only a little—care for *me* over and above the good he got from me. I would have torn open my breast to warm him with my life-blood if I could only have seen him care a little for the pain of my wound. I have labored, I have strained to crush out of this hard life one drop of unselfish love. Fool! men love their own delights; there is no delight to be had in me. And yet I watched till I believed I saw what I watched for. When he was a child he lifted soft eyes toward me, and held my hand willingly: I thought, this boy will surely love me a little: because I give my life to him and strive that he shall know no sorrow, he will care a little when I am thirsty—the drop he lays on my parched lips will be a joy to him. * * * Curses on him! I wish I may see him lie with those red lips white and dry as ashes, and when he looks for pity I wish he may see my face rejoicing in his pain. It is all a lie—this world is a lie—there is no goodness but in hate. Fool! not one drop of love came with all your striving: life has not given you one drop. But there are deep draughts in this world for hatred and revenge. I have memory left for that, and there is strength in my arm—there is strength in my will—and if I can do nothing but kill him——”

But Baldassarre's mind rejected the thought of that brief punishment. His whole soul had been thrilled into immediate unreasoning belief in that eternity of vengeance where he, an undying hate, might clutch forever an

undying traitor, and hear that fair smiling hardness cry and moan with anguish. But the primary need and hope was to see a slow revenge under the same sky and on the same earth where he himself had been forsaken and had fainted with despair. And as soon as he tried to concentrate his mind on the means of attaining his end, the sense of his weakness pressed upon him like a frosty ache. This despised body, which was to be the instrument of a sublime vengeance, must be nourished and decently clad. If he had to wait he must labor, and his labor must be of a humble sort, for he had no skill. He wondered whether the sight of written characters would so stimulate his faculties that he might venture to try and find work as a copyist; *that* might win him some credence for his past scholarship. But no! he dared trust neither hand nor brain. He must be content to do the work that was most like that of a beast of burden: in this mercantile city many porters must be wanted, and he could at least carry weights. Thanks to the justice that struggled in this confused world in behalf of vengeance, his limbs had got back some of their old sturdiness. He was stripped of all else that men could give coin for.

But the new urgency of this habitual thought brought a new suggestson. There was something hanging by a cord round his bare neck; something apparently so paltry that the piety of Turks and Frenchmen had spared it—a tiny parchment bag blackened with age. It had hung round his neck as a precious charm when he was a boy, and he had kept it carefully on his breast, not believing that it contained anything but a tiny scroll of parchment rolled up hard. He might long ago have thrown it away as a relic of his dead mother's superstition; but he had thought of it as a relic of her love, and had kept it. It was part of the piety associated with such *brevi*, that they should never be opened, and at any precious moment in his life Baldassarre would have said that no sort of thirst would prevail upon him to open this little bag for the chance of finding that it contained, not parchment, but an engraved amulet which would be worth money. But now a thirst had come like that which makes men open their own veins to satisfy it, and the thought of the possible amulet no sooner crossed Baldassarre's mind than with nervous fingers he snatched the *breve* from his neck. It all rushed through his mind—the long years he had worn it, the far-off sunny balcony at Naples looking toward the blue waters, where

he had leaned against his mother's knee; but it made no moment of hesitation: all piety now was transmuted into a just revenge. He bit and tore till the doubles of parchment were laid open, and then—it was a sight that made him pant—there *was* an amulet. It was very small, but it was as blue as those far-off waters; it was an engraved sapphire, which must be worth some gold ducats. Baldassarre no sooner saw those possible ducats than he saw some of them exchanged for a poniard. He did not want to use the poniard yet, but he longed to possess it. If he could grasp its handle and try its edge, that blank in his mind—that past which fell away continually—would not make him feel so cruelly helpless: the sharp steel that despised talents and eluded strength would be at his side, as the unfailing friend of feeble justice. There was a sparkling triumph under Baldassarre's black eyebrows as he replaced the little sapphire inside the bits of parchment and wound the string tightly round them.

It was nearly dusk now, and he rose to walk back toward Florence. With his *danari* to buy him some bread, he felt rich: he could lie out in the open air, as he found plenty more doing in all corners of Florence. And in the next few days he had sold his sapphire, had added to his clothing, had bought a bright dagger, and had still a pair of gold florins left. But he meant to hoard that treasure carefully: his lodging was an outhouse with a heap of straw in it, in a thinly-inhabited part of Oltrarno, and he thought of looking about for work as a porter.

He had bought his dagger at Bratti's. Paying his meditated visit there one evening at dusk, he had found that singular rag-merchant just returned from one of his rounds, emptying out his basketful of broken glass and old iron amongst his handsome show of miscellaneous second-hand goods. As Baldassarre entered the shop, and looked toward the smart pieces of apparel, the musical instruments, and weapons, which were displayed in the broadest light of the window, his eye at once singled out a dagger hanging up high against a red scarf. By buying the dagger he could not only satisfy a strong desire, he could open his original errand in a more indirect manner than by speaking of the onyx ring. In the course of bargaining for the weapon, he let drop, with cautious carelessness, that he came from Genoa, and had been directed to Bratti's shop by an acquaintance in that city

who had bought a very valuable ring here. Had the respectable trader any more such rings?

Whereupon Bratti had much to say as to the unlikelihood of such rings being within reach of many people, with much vaunting of his own rare connections, due to his known wisdom and honesty. It might be true that he was a peddler—he chose to be a peddler; though he was rich enough to kick his heels in his shop all day. But those who thought they had said all there was to be said about Bratti when they had called him a peddler, were a good deal further off the truth than the other side of Pisa. How was it that he could put that ring in a stranger's way? It was, because he had a very particular knowledge of a handsome young signor, who did not look quite so fine a feathered bird when Bratti first set eyes on him as he did at the present time. And by a question or two Baldassarre extracted, without any trouble, such a rough and rambling account of Tito's life as the peddler could give, since the time when he had found him sleeping under the Loggia de Cerchi. It never occurred to Bratti that the decent man (who was rather deaf, apparently, asking him to say many things twice over) had any curiosity about Tito; the curiosity was doubtless about himself, as a truly remarkable peddler.

And Baldassarre left Bratti's shop, not only with the dagger at his side, but also with a general knowledge of Tito's conduct and position—of his early sale of the jewels, his immediate quiet settlement of himself at Florence, his marriage, and his great prosperity.

“What story had he told about his previous life—about his father?”

It would be difficult for Baldassarre to discover the answer to that question. Meanwhile, he wanted to learn all he could about Florence. But he found, to his acute distress, that of the new details he learned he could only retain a few, and those only by continual repetition; and he began to be afraid of listening to any new discourse, lest it should obliterate what he was already striving to remember.

The day he was discerned by Tito in the Piazza del Duomo he had the fresh anguish of this consciousness in his mind, and Tito's ready speech fell upon him like the mockery of a glib, defying demon.

As he went home to his heap of straw, and passed by the booksellers' shops in the Via del Garbo; he paused to look at the volumes spread open. Could he by long

gazing at one of those books lay hold of the slippery threads of memory? Could he, by striving, get a firm grasp somewhere, and lift himself above these waters that flowed over him?

He was tempted, and bought the cheapest Greek book he could see. He carried it home and sat on his heap of straw, looking at the characters by the light of the small window; but no inward light arose on them. Soon the evening darkness came; but it made little difference to Baldassarre. His strained eyes seemed still to see the white pages with the unintelligible black marks upon them.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FRUIT IS SEED.

"MY Romola," said Tito, the second morning after he had made his speech in the Piazza del Duomo, "I am to receive grand visitors to-day; the Milanese Count is coming again, and the Seneschal de Beaucaire, the great favorite of the Cristianissimo. I know you don't care to go through smiling ceremonies with these rustling magnates, whom we are not likely to see again; and as they will want to look at the antiquities and the library, perhaps you had better give up your work to-day, and go to see your cousin Brigida."

Romola discerned a wish in this intimation, and immediately assented. But presently, coming back in her hood and mantle, she said, "Oh, what a long breath Florence will take when the gates are flung open, and the last Frenchman is walking out of them! Even you are getting tired, with all your patience, my Tito; confess it. Ah, your head is hot."

He was leaning over his desk, writing, and she had laid her hand on his head, meaning to give a parting caress. The attitude had been a frequent one, and Tito was accustomed, when he felt her hand there, to raise his head, throw himself a little backward, and look up at her. But he felt now as unable to raise his head as if her hand had been a leaden cowl. He spoke instead, in a light tone, as his pen still ran along.

"The French are as ready to go from Florence as the wasps to leave a ripe pear when they have just fastened on it."

Romola, keenly sensitive to the absence of the usual response, took away her hand and said, "I am going, Tito."

"Farewell, my sweet one. I must wait at home. Take Maso with you."

Still Tito did not look up, and Romola went out without saying any more. Very slight things make epochs in married life, and this morning for the first time she admitted to herself not only that Tito had changed, but that he had changed toward her. Did the reason lie in herself? She might perhaps have thought so, if there had not been the facts of the armor and the picture to suggest some external event which was an entire mystery to her.

But Tito no sooner believed that Romola was out of the house than he laid down his pen and looked up, in delightful security from seeing anything else than parchment and broken marble. He was rather disgusted with himself that he had not been able to look up at Romola and behave to her just as usual. He would have chosen, if he could, to be even more than usually kind; but he could not, on a sudden, master an involuntary shrinking from her, which by a subtle relation, depended on those very characteristics in him that made him desire not to fail in his marks of affection. He was about to take a step which he knew would arouse her deep indignation; he would have to encounter much that was unpleasant before he could win her forgiveness. And Tito could never find it easy to face displeasure and anger; his nature was one of those most remote from defiance or impudence, and all his inclinations leaned toward preserving Romola's tenderness. He was not tormented by sentimental scruples which, as he had demonstrated to himself by a very rapid course of argument, had no relation to solid utility; but his freedom from scruples did not release him from the dread of what was disagreeable. Unscrupulousness gets rid of much, but not of toothache, or wounded vanity, or the sense of loneliness, against which, as the world at present stands, there is no security but a thoroughly healthy jaw, and a just, loving soul. And Tito was feeling intensely at this moment that no devices could save him from pain in the impending collision with Romola; no persuasive blandness could cushion him against the shock toward which he was being driven

like a timid animal urged to a desperate leap by the terror of the tooth and the claws that are close behind it.

The secret feeling that he had previously had that the tenacious adherence to Bardo's wishes about the library had become under existing difficulties a piece of sentimental folly, which deprived himself and Romola of substantial advantages, might perhaps never have wrought itself into action but for the events of the past week, which had brought at once the pressure of a new motive and the outlet of a rare opportunity. Nay, it was not till his dread had been aggravated by the sight of Baldassarre looking more like his sane self, not until he had begun to feel that he might be compelled to flee from Florence, that he had brought himself to resolve on his legal right to sell the library before the great opportunity offered by French and Milanese bidders slipped through his fingers. For if he had to leave Florence he did not want to leave it as a destitute wanderer. He had been used to an agreeable existence, and he wished to carry with him all the means at hand for retaining the same agreeable conditions. He wished among other things to carry Romola with him, and *not*, if possible, to carry any infamy. Success had given him a growing appetite for all the pleasures that depend on an advantageous social position, and at no moment could it look like a temptation to him, but only like a hideous alternative, to decamp under dishonor, even with a bag of diamonds, and incur the life of an adventurer. It was not possible for him to make himself independent even of those Florentines who only greeted him with regard; still less was it possible for him to make himself independent of Romola. She was the wife of his first love—he loved her still; she belonged to that furniture of life which he shrank from parting with. He winced under her judgment, he felt uncertain how far the revulsion of her feeling toward him might go; and all that sense of power over a wife which makes a husband risk betrayals that a lover never ventures on, would not suffice to counteract Tito's uneasiness. This was the leaden weight which had been too strong for his will, and kept him from raising his head to meet her eyes. Their pure light brought too near him the prospect of a coming struggle. But it was not to be helped; if they had to leave Florence, they must have money; indeed, Tito could not arrange life at all to his mind without a considerable sum of money. And that problem of arranging life to his mind had been the source

of all his misdoing. He would have been equal to any sacrifice that was not unpleasant.

The rustling magnets came and went, the bargains had been concluded, and Romola returned home; but nothing grave was said that night. Tito was only gay and chatty, pouring forth to her, as he had not done before, stories and descriptions of what he had witnessed during the French visit. Romola thought she discerned an effort in his liveliness, and attributing it to the consciousness in him that she had been wounded in the morning, accepted the effort as an act of penitence, inwardly aching a little at that sign of growing distance between them—that there was an offence about which neither of them dared to speak.

The next day Tito remained away from home until late at night. It was a marked day to Romola, for Piero di Cosimo, stimulated to greater industry on her behalf by the fear that he might have been the cause of pain to her in the past week, had sent home her father's portrait. She had propped it against the back of his old chair, and had been looking at it for some time, when the door opened behind her, and Bernardo del Nero came in.

"It is you, godfather! How I wished you had come sooner! it is getting a little dusk," said Romola, going toward him.

"I have just looked in to tell you the good news, for I know Tito has not come yet," said Bernardo. "The French king moves off to-morrow: not before it is high time. There has been another tussle between our people and his soldiers this morning. But there's a chance now of the city getting into order once more and trade going on."

"That is joyful," said Romola. "But it is sudden, is it not? Tito seemed to think yesterday that there was little prospect of the king's going soon."

"He has been well barked at, that's the reason," said Bernardo, smiling. "His own generals opened their throats pretty well, and at last our Signoria sent the mastiff of the city, Fra Girolamo. The Cristianissimo was frightened at that thunder, and has given the order to move. I'm afraid there'll be small agreement among us when he's gone, but, at any rate, all parties are agreed in being glad not to have Florence stifled with soldiery any longer, and the Frate has barked this time to some purpose. Ah, what is this?" he added, as Romola, clasping

him by the arm, led him in front of the picture. "Let us see."

He began to unwind his long scarf while she placed a seat for him.

"Don't you want your spectacles, godfather?" said Romola, in anxiety that he should see just what she saw.

"No, child, no," said Bernardo, uncovering his gray head, as he seated himself with firm erectness. "For seeing at this distance, my old eyes are perhaps better than your young ones. Old men's eyes are like old men's memories, they are strongest for things a long way off."

"It is better than having no portrait," said Romola, apologetically, after Bernardo had been silent a little while. "It is less like him now than the image I have in my mind, but then that might fade with the years." She rested her arm on the old man's shoulder as she spoke, drawn toward him strongly by their common interest in the dead.

"I don't know," said Bernardo. "I almost think I see Bardo as he was when he was young, better than that picture shows him to me as he was when he was old. Your father had a great deal of fire in his eyes when he was young. It was what I could never understand, that he, with his fiery spirit, which seemed much more impatient than mine, could hang over the books and live with shadows all his life. However, he had put his heart into that."

Bernardo gave a slight shrug as he spoke the last words, but Romola discerned in his voice a feeling that accorded with her own.

"And he was disappointed to the last," she said, involuntarily. But immediately fearing lest her words should be taken to imply an accusation against Tito, she went on almost hurriedly, "If we could only see his longest, dearest wish fulfilled just to his mind!"

"Well, so we may," said Bernardo, kindly, rising and putting on his cap. "The times are cloudy now, but fish are caught by waiting. Who knows? When the wheel has turned often enough, I may be Gonfaloniere yet before I die; and no creditor can touch these things." He looked round as he spoke. Then, turning to her, and patting her cheek, said, "And you need not be afraid of my dying; my ghost will claim nothing. I've taken care of that in my will."

Romola seized the hand that was against her cheek, and put it to her lips in silence.

"Haven't you been scolding your husband for keeping away from home so much lately? I see him everywhere but here," said Bernardo, willing to change the subject.

She felt the flush spread over her neck and face as she said, "He has been very much wanted; you know he speaks so well. I am glad to know that his value is understood."

"You are contented, then, Madonna Orgogliosa?" said Bernardo, smiling, as he moved to the door.

"Assuredly."

Poor Romola! There was one thing that would have made the pang of disappointment in her husband harder to bear; it was, that any one should know he gave her cause for disappointment. This might be a woman's weakness, but it is closely allied to a woman's nobleness. She who willingly lifts up the veil of her married life has profaned it from a sanctuary into a vulgar place.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A REVELATION.

THE next day Romola, like every other Florentine, was excited about the departure of the French. Besides her other reasons for gladness, she had a dim hope, which she was conscious was half superstitious, that those new anxieties about Tito, having come with the burdensome guests, might perhaps vanish with them. The French had been in Florence hardly eleven days, but in that space she had felt more acute unhappiness than she had known in her life before. Tito had adopted the hateful armor on the day of their arrival, and though she could frame no distinct notion why their departure should remove the cause of his fear—though, when she thought of that cause, the image of the prisoner grasping him, as she had seen it in Piero's sketch, urged itself before her and excluded every other—still, when the French were gone, she would be rid of something that was strongly associated with her pain.

Wrapped in her mantle she waited under the loggia at the top of the house, and watched for the glimpses of the troops and royal retinue passing the bridges on their way to the Porta San Piero, that looks toward Siena and Rome.

She even returned to her station when the gates had been closed, that she might feel herself vibrating with the great peal of the bells. It was dusk then, and when at last she descended into the library, she lit her lamp with the resolution that she would overcome the agitation which had made her idle all day, and sit down to work at her copying of the catalogue. Tito had left home early in the morning, and she did not expect him yet. Before he came she intended to leave the library and sit in the pretty saloon, with the dancing nymphs and the birds. She had done so every evening since he had objected to the library as chill and gloomy.

To her great surprise, she had not been at work long before Tito entered. Her first thought was, how cheerless he would feel in the wide darkness of this great room, with one little oil-lamp burning at the further end, and the fire nearly out. She almost ran toward him.

"Tito, dearest, I did not know you would come so soon," she said, nervously, putting up her white arms to unwind his *becchetto*.

"I am not welcome then?" he said, with one of his brightest smiles, clasping her, but playfully holding his head back from her.

"Tito!" She uttered the word in a tone of pretty, loving reproach, and then he kissed her fondly, stroked her hair, as his manner was, and seemed not to mind about taking off his mantle yet. Romola quivered with delight. All the emotions of the day had been preparing in her a keener sensitiveness to the return of this habitual manner. "It will come back," she was saying to herself, "the old happiness will perhaps come back. He is like himself again."

Tito was taking great pains to be like himself; his heart was palpitating with anxiety.

"If I had expected you so soon," said Romola, as she at last helped him to take off his wrappings, "I would have had a little festival prepared to this joyful ringing of the bells. I did not mean to be here in the library when you came home."

"Never mind, sweet," he said carelessly. "Do not think about the fire. Come—come and sit down."

There was a low stool against Tito's chair, and that was Romola's habitual seat when they were talking together. She rested her arm on his knee, as she used to do on her father's, and looked up at him while he spoke. He had

never yet noticed the presence of the portrait, and she had not mentioned it — thinking of it all the more.

“I have been enjoying the clang of the bells for the first time, Tito,” she began. “I liked being shaken and deafened by them: I fancied I was something like a Bacchante possessed by a divine rage. Are not the people looking very joyful to-night?”

“Joyful after a sour and pious fashion,” said Tito, with a shrug. “But, in truth, those who are left behind in Florence have little cause to be joyful: it seems to me, the most reasonable ground of gladness would be to have got out of Florence.”

Tito had sounded the desired keynote without any trouble, or appearance of premeditation. He spoke with no emphasis, but he looked grave enough to make Romola ask rather anxiously —

“Why, Tito? Are there fresh troubles?”

“No need of fresh ones, my Romola. There are three strong parties in the city, all ready to fly at each other’s throats. And if the Frate’s party is strong enough to frighten the other two into silence, as seems most likely, life will be as pleasant and amusing as a funeral. They have the plan of a Great Council simmering already; and if they get it, the man who sings sacred Lauds the loudest will be the most eligible for office. And besides that, the city will be so drained by the payment of this great subsidy to the French king, and by the war to get back Pisa, that the prospect would be dismal enough without the rule of fanatics. On the whole, Florence will be a delightful place for those worthies who entertain themselves in the evening by going into crypts and lashing themselves; but for everything else, the exiles have the best of it. For my own part, I have been thinking seriously that we should be wise to quit Florence, my Romola.”

She started. “Tito, how could we leave Florence? Surely you do not think I could leave it — at least, not yet — not for a long while.” She had turned cold and trembling, and did not find it quite easy to speak. Tito must know the reasons she had in her mind.

“That is all a fabric of your own imagination, my sweet one. Your secluded life has made you lay such false stress on a few things. You know I used to tell you, before we were married, that I wished we were somewhere else than in Florence. If you had seen more places and more people, you would know what I mean when I say there is some-

thing in the Florentines that reminds me of their cutting spring winds. I like people who take life less eagerly; and it would be good for my Romola, too, to see a new life. I should like to dip her a little in the soft waters of forgetfulness."

He leaned forward and kissed her brow, and laid his hand on her fair hair again; but she felt his caress no more than if he had kissed a mask. She was too much agitated by the sense of the distance between their minds to be conscious that his lips touched her.

"Tito, it is not because I suppose Florence is the pleasantest place in the world that I desire not to quit it. It is because I—because we have to see my father's wish fulfilled. My godfather is old; he is seventy-one; we could not leave it to him."

"It is precisely those superstitions which hang about your mind like bedimming clouds, my Romola, that make one great reason why I could wish we were two hundred leagues from Florence. I am obliged to take care of you in opposition to your own will: if those dear eyes, that look so tender, see falsely, I must see for them, and save my wife from wasting her life in disappointing herself by impracticable dreams."

Romola sat silent and motionless: she could not blind herself to the direction in which Tito's words pointed: he wanted to persuade her that they might get the library deposited in some monastery, or take some other means to rid themselves of a task, and of a tie to Florence; and she was determined never to submit her mind to his judgment on this question of duty to her father; she was inwardly prepared to encounter any sort of pain in resistance. But the determination was kept latent in these first moments by the heart-crushing sense that now at last she and Tito must be confessedly divided in their wishes. He was glad of her silence; for, much as he had feared the strength of her feeling, it was impossible for him, shut up in the narrowness that hedges in all merely clever, unimpassioned men, not to overestimate the persuasiveness of his own arguments. His conduct did not look ugly to himself, and his imagination did not suffice to show him exactly how it would look to Romola. He went on in the same gentle, remonstrating tone.

"You know, dearest—your own clear judgment always showed you—that the notion of isolating a collection of books and antiquities, and attaching a single name to

them forever, was one that had no valid, substantial good for its object: and yet more, one that was liable to be defeated in a thousand ways. See what has become of the Medici collections! And, for my part, I consider it even blame-worthy to entertain those petty views of appropriation: why should any one be reasonably glad that Florence should possess the benefits of learned research and taste more than any other city? I understand your feeling about the wishes of the dead; but wisdom puts a limit to these sentiments, else lives might be continually wasted in that sort of futile devotion—like praising deaf gods forever. You gave your life to your father while he lived; why should you demand more of yourself?"

"Because it was a trust," said Romola in a low but distinct voice. "He trusted me, he trusted you, Tito. I did not expect you to feel anything else about it—to feel as I do—but I did expect you to feel that."

"Yes, dearest, of course I should feel it on a point where your father's real welfare or happiness was concerned; but there is no question of that now. If we believe in purgatory, I should be as anxious as you to have masses said; and if I believed it could now pain your father to see his library preserved and used in a rather different way from what he had set his mind on, I should share the strictness of your views. But a little philosophy should teach us to rid ourselves of those air-woven fetters that mortals hang round themselves, spending their lives in misery under the mere imagination of weight. Your mind, which seizes ideas so readily, my Romola, is able to discriminate between substantial good and these brain-wrought fantasies. Ask yourself, dearest, what possible good can these books and antiquities do, stowed together under your father's name in Florence, more than they would do if they were divided or carried elsewhere? Nay, is not the very dispersion of such things in hands that know how to value them, one means of extending their usefulness? This rivalry of Italian cities is very petty and illiberal. The loss of Constantinople was the gain of the whole civilized world."

Romola was still too thoroughly under the painful pressure of the new revelation Tito was making of himself, for her resistance to find any strong vent. As that fluent talk fell on her ears there was a rising contempt within her, which only made her more conscious of her bruised, despairing love, her love for the Tito she had married and

believed in. Her nature, possessed with the energies of strong emotion, recoiled from this hopelessly shallow readiness which professed to appropriate the widest sympathies and had no pulse for the nearest. She still spoke like one who was restrained from showing all she felt. She had only drawn away her arm from his knee, and sat with her hands clasped before her, cold and motionless as locked waters.

"You talk of substantial good, Tito! Are faithfulness, and love, and sweet grateful memories, no good? Is it no good that we should keep our silent promises on which others build because they believe in our love and truth? Is it no good that a just life should be justly honored? Or, is it good that we should harden our hearts against all the wants and hopes of those who have depended on us? What good can belong to men who have such souls? To talk cleverly, perhaps, and find soft couches for themselves, and live and die with their base selves as their best companions."

Her voice had gradually risen till there was a ring of scorn in the last words; she made a slight pause, but he saw there were other words quivering on her lips, and he chose to let them come.

"I know of no good for cities or the world if they are to be made up of such beings. But I am not thinking of other Italian cities and the whole civilized world—I am thinking of my father, and of my love and sorrow for him, and of his just claims on us. I would give up anything else, Tito,—I would leave Florence,—what else did I live for but for him and you? But I will not give up that duty. What have I to do with your arguments? It was a yearning of *his* heart, and therefore it is a yearning of mine."

Her voice, from having been tremulous, had become full and firm. She felt that she had been urged on to say all that it was needful for her to say. She thought, poor thing, there was nothing harder to come than this struggle against Tito's suggestions as against the meaner part of herself.

He had begun to see clearly that he could not persuade her into assent: he must take another course, and show her that the time for resistance was past. That, at least, would put an end to further struggle; and if the disclosure were not made by himself to-night, to-morrow it must be made in another way. This necessity nerved his

courage; and his experience of her affectionateness and unexpected submissiveness, ever since their marriage until now, encouraged him to hope that, at last, she would accommodate herself to what had been his will.

"I am sorry to hear you speak in that spirit of blind persistence, my Romola," he said quietly, "because it obliges me to give you pain. But I partly foresaw your opposition, and as a prompt decision was necessary, I avoided that obstacle, and decided without consulting you. The very care of a husband for his wife's interest compels him to that separate action sometimes—even when he has such a wife as you, my Romola."

She turned her eyes on him in breathless inquiry.

"I mean," he said, answering her look, "that I have arranged for the transfer, both of the books and of the antiquities, where they will find the highest use and value. The books have been bought for the Duke of Milan, the marbles and bronzes and the rest are going to France: and both will be protected by the stability of a great Power, instead of remaining in a city which is exposed to ruin."

Before he had finished speaking Romola had started from her seat and stood up looking down at him, with tightened hands falling before her, and, for the first time in her life, with a flash of fierceness in her scorn and anger.

"You have *sold* them?" she asked, as if she distrusted her ears.

"I have," said Tito, quailing a little. The scene was unpleasant—the descending scorn already scorched him.

"You are a treacherous man!" she said, with something grating in her voice, as she looked down at him.

She was silent for a minute, and he sat still, feeling that ingenuity was powerless just now. Suddenly she turned away, and said, in an agitated tone, "It may be hindered—I am going to my godfather."

In an instant Tito started up, went to the door, locked it, and took out the key. It was time for all the masculine predominance that was latent in him to show itself. But he was not angry; he only felt that the moment was eminently unpleasant, and that when this scene was at an end he should be glad to keep away from Romola for a little while. But it was absolutely necessary first that she should be reduced to passiveness.

"Try to calm yourself a little, Romola," he said, leaning in the easiest attitude possible against a pedestal under the bust of a grim old Roman. Not that he was inwardly

easy: his heart palpitated with a moral dread, against which no chain armor could be found. He had locked in his wife's anger and scorn, but he had been obliged to lock himself in with it; and his blood did not rise with contest—his olive cheek was perceptibly paled.

Romola had paused and turned her eyes on him as she saw him take his stand and lodge the key in his scarsella. Her eyes were flashing, and her whole frame seemed to be possessed by impetuous force that wanted to leap out in some deed. All the crushing pain of disappointment in her husband, which had made the strongest part of her consciousness a few minutes before, was annihilated by the vehemence of her indignation. She could not care in this moment that the man she was despising as he leaned there in his loathsome beauty—she could not care that he was her husband; she could only feel that she despised him. The pride and fierceness of the old Bardo blood had been thoroughly awaked in her for the first time.

"Try at least to understand the fact," said Tito, "and do not seek to take futile steps which may be fatal. It is of no use for you to go to your godfather. Messer Bernardo cannot reverse what I have done. Only sit down. You would hardly wish, if you were quite yourself, to make known to any third person what passes between us in private."

Tito knew that he had touched the right fibre there. But she did not sit down; she was too unconscious of her body voluntarily to change her attitude.

"Why can it not be reversed?" she said, after a pause. "Nothing is moved yet."

"Simply because the sale has been concluded by written agreement; the purchasers have left Florence, and I hold the bonds for the purchase-money."

"If my father had suspected you of being a faithless man," said Romola, in a tone of bitter scorn, which insisted on darting out before she could say anything else, "he would have placed the library safely out of your power. But death overtook him too soon, and when you were sure his ear was deaf, and his hand stiff, you robbed him." She paused an instant, and then said, with gathered passion, "Have you robbed somebody else, who is *not* dead? Is that the reason you wear armor?"

Romola had been driven to utter the words as men are driven to use the lash of the horsewhip. At first, Tito felt horribly cowed; it seemed to him that the disgrace he

had been dreading would be worse than he had imagined it. But soon there was a reaction: such power of dislike and resistance as there was within him was beginning to rise against a wife whose voice seemed like the herald of a retributive fate. Her, at least, his quick mind told him that he might master.

"It is useless," he said coolly, "to answer the words of madness, Romola. Your peculiar feeling about your father has made you mad at this moment. Any rational person looking at the case from a due distance will see that I have taken the wisest course. Apart from the influence of your exaggerated feelings on him, I am convinced that Messer Bernardo would be of that opinion."

"He would not!" said Romola. "He lives in the hope of seeing my father's wish exactly fulfilled. We spoke of it together only yesterday. He will help me yet. Who are these men to whom you have sold my father's property?"

"There is no reason why you should not be told, except that it signifies little. The Count di San Severino and the Seneschal de Beaucaire are now on their way with the king to Siena."

"They may be overtaken and persuaded to give up their purchase," said Romola, eagerly, her anger beginning to be surmounted by anxious thought.

"No, they may not," said Tito, with cool decision.

"Why?"

"Because I do not choose that they should."

"But if you were paid the money?—we will pay you the money," said Romola.

No words could have disclosed more fully her sense of alienation from Tito; but they were spoken with less of bitterness than of anxious pleading. And he felt stronger, for he saw that the first impulse of fury was past.

"No, my Romola. Understand that such thoughts as these are impracticable. You would not, in a reasonable moment, ask your godfather to bury three thousand florins in addition to what he has already paid on the library. I think your pride and delicacy would shrink from that."

She began to tremble and turn cold again with discouragement, and sank down on the carved chest near which she was standing. He went on in a clear voice, under which she shuddered, as if it had been a narrow cold stream coursing over a hot cheek.

"Moreover, it is not my will that Messer Bernardo should advance the money, even if the project were not an

utterly wild one. And I beg you to consider, before you take any step or utter any word on the subject, what will be the consequences of your placing yourself in opposition to me, and trying to exhibit your husband in the odious light which your own distempered feelings cast over him. What object will you serve by injuring me with Messer Bernardo? The event is irrevocable, the library is sold, and you are my wife."

Every word was spoken for the sake of a calculated effect, for his intellect was urged into the utmost activity by the danger of the crisis. He knew that Romola's mind would take in rapidly enough all the wide meaning of his speech. He waited and watched her in silence.

She had turned her eyes from him, and was looking on the ground, and in that way she sat for several minutes. When she spoke, her voice was quite altered,—it was quiet and cold.

"I have one thing to ask."

"Ask anything that I can do without injuring us both, Romola."

"That you will give me that portion of the money which belongs to my godfather, and let me pay him."

"I must have some assurance from you first, of the attitude you intend to take toward me."

"Do you believe in assurances, Tito?" she said, with a tinge of returning bitterness.

"From you, I do."

"I will do you no harm. I shall disclose nothing. I will say nothing to pain him or you. You say truly, the event is irrevocable."

"Then I will do what you desire to-morrow morning."

"To-night, if possible," said Romola, "that we may not speak of it again."

"It is possible," he said, moving toward the lamp, while she sat still, looking away from him with absent eyes.

Presently he came and bent down over her, to put a piece of paper into her hand. "You will receive something in return, you are aware, my Romola?" he said, gently, not minding so much what had passed, now he was secure; and feeling able to try and propitiate her.

"Yes," she said, taking the paper, without looking at him, "I understand."

"And you will forgive me, my Romola, when you have had time to reflect." He just touched her brow with his

lips, but she took no notice, and seemed really unconscious of the act.

She was aware that he unlocked the door and went out. She moved her head and listened. The great door of the court opened and shut again. She started up as if some sudden freedom had come, and going to her father's chair where his picture was propped, fell on her knees before it. and burst into sobs.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ALDASSARRE MAKES AN ACQUAINTANCE.

WHEN Baldassarre was wandering about Florence in search of a spare outhouse where he might have the cheapest of sheltered beds, his steps had been attracted toward that sole portion of ground within the walls of the city which is not perfectly level, and where the spectator, lifted above the roofs of the houses, can see beyond the city to the protecting hills and far stretching valley, otherwise shut out from his view except along the welcome opening made by the course of the Arno. Part of that ground has been already seen by us as the hill of Bogoli, at that time a great stone-quarry; but the side toward which Baldassarre directed his steps was the one that sloped down behind the Via de Bardi, and was most commonly called the hill of San Giorgio. Bratti had told him that Tito's dwelling was in the Via de Bardi; and, after surveying that street, he turned up the slope of the hill which he had observed as he was crossing the bridge. If he could find a sheltering outhouse on that hill, he would be glad: he had now for some years been accustomed to live with a broad sky about him; and, moreover, the narrow passes of the streets, with their strip of sky above, and the unknown labyrinth around them, seemed to intensify his sense of loneliness and feeble memory.

The hill was sparsely inhabited, and covered chiefly by gardens; but in one spot was a piece of rough ground jagged with great stones, which had never been cultivated since a landslip had ruined some houses there toward the end of the thirteenth century. Just above the edge of this broken ground stood a queer little square building,

gnat, like Venus, was born from the waters. Scala, in reply, begged to say that his verses were never intended for a scholar with such delicate olfactories as Politian, nearest of all living men to the perfection of the ancients, and of a taste so fastidious that sturgeon itself must seem insipid to him; defended his own verses, nevertheless, though indeed they were written hastily, without correction, and intended as an agreeable distraction during the summer heat to himself and such friends as were satisfied with mediocrity, he, Scala, not being like some other people, who courted publicity through the book-sellers. For the rest, he had barely enough Greek to make out the sense of the epigram so graciously sent him, to say nothing of tasting its elegances; but—the epigram was Politian's: what more need be said? Still, by way of post-script, he feared that his incomparable friend's comparison of the gnat to Venus, on account of its origin from the waters, was in many ways ticklish. On the one hand, Venus might be offended; and on the other, unless the poet intended an allusion to the doctrine of Thales, that cold and damp origin seemed doubtful to Scala in the case of a creature so fond of warmth; a fish were perhaps the better comparison, or, when the power of flying was in question, an eagle, or indeed, when the darkness was taken into consideration, a bat or an owl were a less obscure and more apposite parallel, etc., etc. Here was a great opportunity for Politian. He was not aware, he wrote, that when he had Scala's verses placed before him, there was any question of sturgeon, but rather of frogs and gudgeons: made short work with Scala's defense of his own Latin, and mangled him terribly on the score of the stupid criticisms he had ventured on the Greek epigram kindly forwarded to him as a model. Wretched cavils, indeed! for as to the damp origin of the gnat, there was the authority of Virgil himself, who had called it the "*alumnus* of the waters"; and as to what his dear dull friend had to say about the fish, the eagle, and the rest, it was "*nihil ad rem*"; for because the eagle could fly higher, it by no means followed that the gnat could not fly at all, etc., etc. He was ashamed, however, to dwell on such trivialities, and thus to swell a gnat into an elephant; but, for his own part, would only add that he had nothing deceitful or double about him, neither was he to be caught when present by the false blandishments of those who slandered him in his absence, agreeing rather with a Homeric senti-

unfortunately, a little too high, and obliged the small observer to stand on a low stool of a rickety character; but Tessa would have stood a long while in a much more inconvenient position for the sake of seeing a little variety in her life. She had been drawn to the opening at the first loud tones of the strange voice speaking to Monna Lisa; and darting gently across her room every now and then to peep at something, she continued to stand there until the wood had been chopped, and she saw Baldassarre enter the outhouse, as the dusk was gathering, and seat himself on the straw.

A great temptation had laid hold of Tessa's mind; she would go and take that old man part of her supper, and talk to him a little. He was not deaf like Monna Lisa, and besides she could say a great many things to him that it was no use to shout at Monna Lisa, who knew them already. And he was a stranger—strangers came from a long way off and went away again, and lived nowhere in particular. It was naughty, she knew, for obedience made the largest part in Tessa's idea of duty; but it would be something to confess to the Padre next Pasqua, and there was nothing else to confess except going to sleep sometimes over her beads, and being a little cross with Monna Lisa because she was so deaf; for she had as much idleness as she liked now, and was never frightened into telling white lies. She turned away from her shutter with rather an excited expression in her childish face, which was as pretty and pouting as ever. Her garb was still that of a simple contadina, but of a contadina prepared for a festa: her gown of dark-green serge, with its red girdle, was very clean and neat; she had the string of red glass beads round her neck; and her brown hair, rough from curliness, was duly knotted up, and fastened with the silver pin. She had but one new ornament, and she was very proud of it, for it was a fine gold ring.

Tessa sat on the low stool, nursing her knees, for a minute or two, with her little soul poised in fluttering excitement on the edge of this pleasant transgression. It was quite irresistible. She had been commanded to make no acquaintances, and warned that if she did, all her new happy lot would vanish away, and be like a hidden treasure that turned to lead as soon as it was brought to the daylight; and she had been so obedient that when she had to go to church she had kept her face shaded by her hood and had pursed up her lips quite tightly. It was true her

obedience had been a little helped by her own dread lest the alarming stepfather Nofri should turn up even in this quarter, so far from the Por del Prato, and beat her at least, if he did not drag her back to work for him. But this old man was not an acquaintance; he was a poor stranger going to sleep in the outhouse, and he probably knew nothing of stepfather Nofri; and, besides, if she took him some supper, he would like her, and not want to tell anything about her. Monna Lisa would say she must not go and talk to him, therefore Monna Lisa must not be consulted. It did not signify what she found out after it had been done.

Supper was being prepared, she knew—a mountain of macaroni flavored with cheese, fragrant enough to tame any stranger. So she tripped down-stairs with a mind full of deep designs, and first asking with an innocent look what that noise of talking had been, without waiting for an answer, knit her brow with a peremptory air, something like a kitten trying to be formidable, and sent the old woman up-stairs, saying she would chose to eat her supper down below. In three minutes Tessa with her lantern in one hand and a wooden bowl of macaroni in the other, was kicking gently at the door of the outhouse; and Baldassarre, roused from sad reverie, doubted in the first moment whether he were awake as he opened the door and saw this surprising little handmaid, with delight in her wide eyes, breaking in on his dismal loneliness,

“I’ve brought you some supper,” she said, lifting her mouth toward his ear and shouting, as if he had been deaf like Monna Lisa. “Sit down and eat it, while I stay with you.”

Surprise and distrust surmounted every other feeling in Baldassarre, but though he had no smile or word of gratitude ready, there could not be any impulse to push away this visitant, and he sank down passively on his straw again, while Tessa placed herself close to him, put the wooden bowl on his lap, and set down the lantern in front of them, crossing her hands before her, and nodding at the bowl with a significant smile, as much as to say, “Yes, you may really eat it.” For, in the excitement of carrying out her deed, she had forgotten her previous thought that the stranger would not be deaf, and had fallen into her habitual alternative of dumb show and shouting.

The invitation was not a disagreeable one, for he had been gnawing a remnant of dry bread, which had left

plenty of appetite for anything warm and relishing. Tessa watched the disappearance of two or three mouthfuls without speaking, for she had thought his eyes rather fierce at first; but now she ventured to put her mouth to his ear again and cry—

“I like my supper, don’t you?”

It was not a smile, but rather the milder look of a dog touched by kindness, but unable to smile, that Baldassarre turned on this round blue-eyed thing that was caring about him.

“Yes,” he said; “but I can hear well—I’m not deaf.”

“It is true; I forgot,” said Tessa, lifting her hands and clasping them. “But Monna Lisa is deaf, and I live with her. She’s a kind old woman, and I’m not frightened at her. And we live very well: we have plenty of nice things. I can have nuts if I like. And I’m not obliged to work now. I used to have to work, and I didn’t like it; but I liked feeding the mules, and I should like to see poor Giannetta, the little mule again. We’ve only got a goat and two kids, and I used to talk to the goat a good deal, because there was nobody else but Monna Lisa. But now I’ve got something else—can you guess what it is?”

She drew her head back, and looked with a challenging smile at Baldassarre, as if she had proposed a difficult riddle to him.

“No,” said he, putting aside his bowl, and looking at her dreamily. It seemed as if this young prattling thing were some memory come back out of his own youth.

“You like me to talk to you, don’t you?” said Tessa, “but you must not tell anybody. Shall I fetch you a bit of cold sausage?”

He shook his head, but he looked so mild now that Tessa felt quite at her ease.

“Well, then, I’ve got a little baby. Such a pretty *bambinetto*, with little fingers and nails! Not old yet; it was born at the *Natività*, Monna Lisa says. I was married one *Natività*, a long, long while ago, and nobody knew. O Santa Madonna! I didn’t mean to tell you that!”

Tessa set up her shoulders and bit her lip, looking at Baldassarre as if this betrayal of secrets must have an exciting effect on him too. But he seemed not to care much; and perhaps that was the nature of strangers.

“Yes,” she said, carrying on her thought aloud, “you are a stranger, you don’t live anywhere or know anybody, do you?”

"No," said Baldassarre, also thinking aloud, rather than consciously answering, "I only know one man."

"His name is not Nofri, is it?" said Tessa, anxiously.

"No," said Baldassarre, noticing her look of fear. "Is that your husband's name?"

That mistaken supposition was very amusing to Tessa. She laughed and clapped her hands as she said—

"No, indeed! But I must not tell you anything about my husband. You would never think what he is—not at all like Nofri!"

She laughed again at the delightful incongruity between the name of Nofri—which was not at all separable from the idea of the cross-grained stepfather—and the idea of her husband.

"But I don't see him very often," she went on, more gravely. "And sometimes I pray to the Holy Madonna to send him oftener, and once she did. But I must go back to my bimbo now. I'll bring it to show you to-morrow. You would like to see it. Sometimes it cries and makes a face, but only when it's hungry, Monna Lisa says. You wouldn't think it, but Monna Lisa had babies once, and they are all dead old men. My husband says she will never die now, because she's so well dried. I'm glad of that, for I'm fond of her. You would like to stay here to-morrow, shouldn't you?"

"I should like to have this place to come and rest in, that's all," said Baldassarre. "I would pay for it, and harm nobody."

"No, indeed; I think you are not a bad old man. But you look sorry about something. Tell me, is there anything you shall cry about when I leave you by yourself? I used to cry once."

"No, child; I think I shall cry no more."

"That's right; and I'll bring you some breakfast, and show you the bimbo. Good-night."

Tessa took up her bowl and lantern, and closed the door behind her. The pretty loving apparition had been no more to Baldassarre than a faint rainbow on the blackness to the man who is wrestling in deep waters. He hardly thought of her again till his dreamy waking passed into the more vivid images of disturbed sleep.

But Tessa thought much of him. She had no sooner entered the house than she told Monna Lisa what she had done, and insisted that the stranger should be allowed to come and rest in the outhouse when he liked. The old

woman, who had had her notions of making him a useful tenant, made a great show of reluctance, shook her head, and urged that Messer Naldo would be angry if she let any one come about the house. Tessa did not believe that. Naldo had said nothing against strangers who lived nowhere; and this old man knew nobody except one person, who was not Nofri.

"Well," conceded Monna Lisa, at last, "if I let him stay for a while and carry things up the hill for me, thou must keep thy counsel and tell nobody."

"No," said Tessa, "I'll only tell the bimbo."

"And then," Monna Lisa went on, in her thick undertone, "God may love us well enough not to let Messer Naldo find out anything about it. For he never comes here but at dark; and as he was here two days ago, it's likely he'll never come at all till the old man's gone away again."

"Oh me! Monna," said Tessa, clasping her hands, "I wish Naldo had not to go such a long, long way sometimes before he comes back again."

"Ah, child! the world's big, they say. There are places behind the mountains, and if people go night and day, night and day, they get to Rome, and see the Holy Father."

Tessa looked submissive in the presence of this mystery, and began to rock her baby, and sing syllables of vague loving meaning, in tones that imitated a triple chime.

The next morning she was unusually industrious in the prospect of more dialogue, and of the pleasure she should give the poor old stranger by showing him her baby. But before she could get ready to take Baldassarre his breakfast, she found that Monna Lisa had been employing him as a drawer of water. She deferred her paternosters, and hurried down to insist that Baldassarre should sit on his straw, so that she might come and sit by him again while he ate his breakfast. That attitude made the new companionship all the more delightful to Tessa, for she had been used to sitting on straw in old days along with her goats and mules.

"I will not let Monna Lisa give you too much work to do," she said, bringing him some steaming broth and soft bread. "I don't like much work, and I daresay you don't. I like sitting in the sunshine and feeding things. Monna Lisa says work is good, but she does it all herself, so I don't mind. She's not a cross old woman; you needn't

be afraid of her being cross. And now, you eat that, and I'll go and fetch my baby and show it you."

Presently she came back with the small mummy-case in her arms. The mummy looked very lively, having unusually large dark eyes, though no more than the usual indication of a future nose.

"This is my baby," said Tessa, seating herself close to Baldassarre. "You didn't think it was so pretty, did you? It is like the little Gesù, and I should think the Santa Madonna would be kinder to me now, is it not true? But I have not much to ask for, because I have everything now—only that I should see my husband oftener. You may hold the bambino a little, if you like, but I think you must not kiss him, because you might hurt him."

She spoke this prohibition in a tone of soothing excuse, and Baldassarre could not refuse to hold the small package. "Poor thing! poor thing!" he said, in a deep voice which had something strangely threatening in its apparent pity. It did not seem to him as if this guileless loving little woman could reconcile him to the world at all, but rather that she was with him against the world, that she was a creature who would need to be avenged.

"Oh, don't you be sorry for me," she said; "for though I don't see him often, he is more beautiful and good than anybody else in the world. I say prayers to him when he's away. You couldn't think what he is!"

She looked at Baldassarre with a wide glance of mysterious meaning, taking the baby from him again, and almost wishing he would question her as if he wanted very much to know more.

"Yes, I could," said Baldassarre, rather bitterly.

"No, I'm sure you never could," said Tessa, earnestly. "You thought he might be Nofri," she added, with a triumphant air of conclusiveness. But never mind; you couldn't know. What is your name?"

He rubbed his hand over his knitted brow, then looked at her blankly and said, "Ah, child, what is it?"

It was not that he did not often remember his name well enough; and if he had had presence of mind now to remember it, he would have chosen not to tell it. But a sudden question appealing to his memory, had a paralyzing effect, and in that moment he was conscious of nothing but helplessness.

Ignorant as Tessa was, the pity stirred in her by his blank look taught her to say—

"Never mind: you are a stranger, it is no matter about your having a name. Good-bye now, because I want my breakfast. You will come here and rest when you like; Monna Lisa says you may. And don't you be unhappy, for we'll be good to you."

"Poor thing!" said Baldassarre again.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

NO PLACE FOR REPENTANCE.

MESSER NALDO came again sooner than was expected: he came on the evening of the twenty-eighth of November, only eleven days after his previous visit, proving that he had not gone far beyond the mountains; and a scene which we have witnessed as it took place that evening in the Via de Bardi may help to explain the impulse which turned his steps toward the hill of San Giorgio.

When Tito had first found this home for Tessa, on his return from Rome, more than a year and a half ago, he had acted, he persuaded himself, simply under the constraint imposed on him by his own kindness after the unlucky incident which had made foolish little Tessa imagine him to be her husband. It was true that the kindness was manifested toward a pretty trusting thing whom it was impossible to be near without feeling inclined to caress and pet her; but it was not less true that Tito had movements of kindness toward her apart from any contemplated gain to himself. Otherwise, charming as her prettiness and prattle were in a lazy moment, he might have preferred to be free from her; for he was not in love with Tessa—he was in love for the first time in his life with an entirely different woman, whom he was not simply inclined to shower caresses upon, but whose presence possessed him so that the simple sweep of her long tresses across his cheek seemed to vibrate through the hours. All the young, ideal passion he had in him had been stirred by Romola, and his fibre was too fine, his intellect too bright for him to be tempted into the habits of a gross pleasure-seeker. But he had spun a web about himself and Tessa, which he felt incapable of breaking; in the first moments after the mimic marriage he had been

prompted to leave her under an illusion by a distinct calculation of his own possible need, but since that critical moment it seemed to him that the web had gone on spinning itself in spite of him, like a growth over which he had no power. The elements of kindness and self-indulgence are hard to distinguish in a soft nature like Tito's; and the annoyance he had felt under Tessa's pursuit of him on the day of his betrothal, the thorough intention of revealing the truth to her with which he set out to fulfil his promise of seeing her again, were a sufficiently strong argument to him that in ultimately leaving Tessa under her illusion and providing a home for her, he had been overcome by his own kindness. And in these days of his first devotion to Romola he needed a self-justifying argument. He had learned to be glad that she was deceived about some things. But every strong feeling makes to itself a conscience of its own—has its own piety; just as much as the feeling of the son toward the mother, which will sometimes survive amid the worst fumes of depravation; and Tito could not yet be easy in committing a secret offense against his wedded love.

But he was all the more careful in taking precautions to preserve the secrecy of the offense. Monna Lisa, who, like many of her class, never left her habitation except to go to one or two particular shops, and to confession once a year, knew nothing of his real name or whereabouts: she only knew that he paid her so as to make her very comfortable, and minded little about the rest, save that she got fond of Tessa, and found pleasure in the cares for which she was paid. There was some mystery behind, clearly, since Tessa was a *contadina*, and Messer Naldo was a signor; but, for aught Monna Lisa knew, he might be a real husband. For Tito had thoroughly frightened Tessa into silence about the circumstances of their marriage, by telling her that if she broke that silence she would never see him again; and Monna Lisa's deafness, which made it impossible to say anything to her without some premeditation, had saved Tessa from any incautious revelation to her, such as had run off her tongue in talking with Baldassarre. For a long while Tito's visits were so rare, that it seemed likely enough he took journeys between them. They were prompted chiefly by the desire to see that all things were going on well with Tessa; and though he always found his visit pleasanter than the prospect of it—always felt anew the charm of that pretty ignorant

lovingness and trust—he had not yet any real need of it. But he was determined, if possible, to preserve the simplicity on which the charm depended: to keep Tessa a genuine contadina, and not place the small field-flower among conditions that would rob it of its grace. He would have been shocked to see her in the dress of any other rank than her own; the piquancy of her talk would be all gone, if things began to have new relations for her, if her world became wider, her pleasures less childish; and the squirrel-like enjoyment of nuts at discretion marked the standard of the luxuries he had provided for her. By this means, Tito saved Tessa's charm from being sullied; and he also, by a convenient coincidence, saved himself from aggravating expenses that were already rather importunate to a man whose money was all required for his avowed habits of life.

This, in brief, had been the history of Tito's relation to Tessa up to a very recent date. It is true that once or twice before Bardo's death, the sense that there was Tessa up the hill, with whom it was possible to pass an hour agreeably, had been an inducement to him to escape from a little weariness of the old man, when, for lack of any positive engagement, he might otherwise have borne the weariness patiently and shared Romola's burden. But the moment when he had first felt a real hunger for Tessa's ignorant lovingness and belief in him had not come till quite lately, and it was distinctly marked out by circumstances as little to be forgotten as the oncoming of a malady that has permanently vitiated the sight and hearing. It was the day when he had first seen Baldassarre, and had bought the armor. Returning across the bridge that night, with the coat of mail in his hands, he had felt an unconquerable shrinking from an immediate encounter with Romola. She, too, knew little of the actual world; she, too, trusted him; but he had an uneasy consciousness that behind her frank eyes there was a nature that could judge him, and that any ill-founded trust of hers sprang not from pretty brute-like incapacity, but from a nobleness which might prove an alarming touchstone. He wanted a little ease, a little repose from self-control, after the agitation and exertions of the day; he wanted to be where he could adjust his mind to the morrow, without caring how he behaved at the present moment. And there was a sweet adoring creature within reach whose presence was as safe and unconstraining as

that of her own kids—who would believe any fable, and remained quite unimpressed by public opinion. And so on that evening, when Romola was waiting and listening for him, he turned his steps up the hill.

No wonder, then, that the steps took the same course on this evening, eleven days later, when he had had to recoil under Romola's first outburst of scorn. He could not wish Tessa in his wife's place, or refrain from wishing that his wife should be thoroughly reconciled to him; for it was Romola, and not Tessa, that belonged to the world where all the larger desires of a man who had ambition and effective faculties must necessarily lie. But he wanted a refuge from a standard disagreeably rigorous, of which he could not make himself independent simply by thinking it folly; and Tessa's little soul was that inviting refuge.

It was not much more than eight o'clock when he went up the stone steps to the door of Tessa's room. Usually she heard his entrance into the house, and ran to meet him, but not to-night; and when he opened the door he saw the reason. A single dim light was burning above the dying fire, and showed Tessa in a kneeling attitude by the head of the bed where the baby lay. Her head had fallen aside on the pillow, and her brown rosary, which usually hung above the pillow over the picture of the Madonna and the golden palm-branches, lay in the loose grasp of her right hand. She had gone fast asleep over her beads. Tito stepped lightly across the little room, and sat down close to her. She had probably heard the opening of the door as part of her dream, for he had not been looking at her two moments before she opened her eyes. She opened them without any start, and remained quite motionless looking at him, as if the sense that he was there smiling at her shut out any impulse which could disturb that happy passiveness. But when he put his hand under her chin, and stooped to kiss her, she said—

“I dreamed it, and then I said it was dreaming—and then I woke, and it was true.”

“Little sinner!” said Tito, pinching her chin, “you have not said half your prayers. I will punish you by not looking at your baby; it is ugly.”

Tessa did not like those words, even though Tito was smiling. She had some pouting distress in her face, as she said, bending anxiously over the baby—

“Ah, it is not true! He is prettier than anything.

You do not think he is ugly. You will look at him. He is even prettier than when you saw him before—only he's asleep, and you can't see his eyes or his tongue, and I can't show you his hair—and it grows—isn't it wonderful? Look at him! It's true his face is very much all alike when he's asleep, there is not so much to see as when he's awake. If you kiss him very gently, he won't wake: you want to kiss him, is it not true?"

He satisfied her by giving the small mummy a butterfly kiss, and then putting his hand on her shoulder and turning her face toward him, said, "You like looking at the baby better than looking at your husband, you false one!"

She was still kneeling, and now rested her hands on his knee, looking up at him like one of Fra Lippo Lippi's round-cheeked adoring angels.

"No," she said, shaking her head; "I love you always best, only I want you to look at the bambino and love him; I used only to want you to love me."

"And did you expect me to come again so soon?" said Tito, inclined to make her prattle. He still felt the effects of the agitation he had undergone—still felt like a man who has been violently jarred; and this was the easiest relief from silence and solitude.

"Ah, no," said Tessa, "I have counted the days—to-day I began at my right thumb again—since you put on the beautiful chain-coat, that Messer San Michele gave you to take care of you on your journey. And you have got it on now," she said, peeping through the opening in the breast of his tunic. "Perhaps it made you come back sooner."

"Perhaps it did, Tessa," he said. "But don't mind the coat now. Tell me what has happened since I was here. Did you see the tents in the Prato, and the soldiers and horsemen when they passed the bridges—did you hear the drums and trumpets?"

"Yes, and I was rather frightened, because I thought the soldiers might come up here. And Monna Lisa was a little afraid too, for she said they might carry our kids off; she said it was their business to do mischief. But the Holy Madonna took care of us, for we never saw one of them up here. But something has happened, only I hardly dare tell you, and that is what I was saying more Aves for."

"What do you mean, Tessa?" said Tito, rather anxiously. "Make haste and tell me."

"Yes, but will you let me sit on your knee? Because then I think I shall not be so frightened."

He took her on his knee, and put his arm round her, but looked grave: it seemed that something unpleasant must pursue him even here,

"At first I didn't mean to tell you," said Tessa, speaking almost in a whisper, as if that would mitigate the offense; "because we thought the old man would be gone away before you came again, and it would be as if it had not been. But now he is there, and you are come, and I never did anything you told me not to do before. And I want to tell you, and then you will perhaps forgive me, for it is a long while before I go to confession."

"Yes, tell me everything, my Tessa." He began to hope it was after all a trivial matter.

"Oh, you will be sorry for him: I'm afraid he cries about something when I don't see him. But that was not the reason I went to him first; it was because I wanted to talk to him and show him my baby, and he was a stranger that lived nowhere, and I thought you wouldn't care so much about my talking to him. And I think he is not a bad old man, and he wanted to come and sleep on the straw next to the goats, and I made Monna Lisa say, 'Yes, he might,' and he's away all the day almost, but when he comes back I talk to him, and take him something to eat."

"Some beggar, I suppose. It was naughty of you, Tessa, and I am angry with Monna Lisa. I must have him sent away."

"No, I think he is not a beggar, for he wanted to pay Monna Lisa, only she asked him to work for her instead. And he gets himself shaved, and his clothes are tidy: Monna Lisa says he is a decent man. But sometimes I think he is not in his right mind: Lupo, at Peretola, was not in his right mind, and he looks a little like Lupo sometimes, as if he didn't know where he was."

"What sort of face has he?" said Tito, his heart beginning to beat strangely. He was so haunted by the thought of Baldassarre, that it was already he whom he saw in imagination sitting on the straw not many yards from him. "Fetch your stool, my Tessa, and sit on it."

"Shall you not forgive me?" she said, timidly, moving from his knee.

"Yes, I will not be angry—only sit down, and tell me what sort of old man this is."

"I can't think how to tell you: he is not like my step-

father Nofri, or anybody. His face is yellow, and he has deep marks in it; and his hair is white, but there is none on the top of his head: and his eye-brows are black, and he looks from under them at me, and says, 'Poor thing!' to me, as if he thought I was beaten as I used to be; and that seems as if he couldn't be in his right mind, doesn't it? And I asked him his name once, but he couldn't tell me: yet everybody has a name—is it not true? And he has a book now, and keeps looking at it ever so long, as if he were a Padre. But I think he is not saying prayers, for his lips never move;—ah, you are angry with me, or is it because you are sorry for the old man?"

Tito's eyes were still fixed on Tessa; but he had ceased to see her, and was only seeing the objects her words suggested. It was this absent glance which frightened her, and she could not help going to neel at his side again. But he did not heed her, and she dared not touch him, or speak to him: she knelt, trembling and wondering; and this state of mind suggested her beads to her, she took them from the floor and began to tell them again, her pretty lips moving silently, and her blue eyes wide with anxiety and struggling tears.

Tito was quite unconscious of her movements—unconscious of his own attitude: he was in that wrapt state in which a man will grasp painful roughness, and press and press it closer, and never feel it. A new possibility had risen before him, which might dissolve at once the wretched conditions of fear and suppression that were marring his life. Destiny had brought within his reach an opportunity of retrieving that moment on the steps of the Duomo, when the past had grasped him with living quivering hands, and he had disowned it. A few steps, and he might be face to face with his father, with no witness by; he might seek forgiveness and reconciliation; and there was money now, from the sale of the library, to enable them to leave Florence without disclosure and go into Southern Italy, where under the probable French rule, he had already laid a foundation for patronage. Romola need never know the whole truth, for she could have no certain means of identifying that prisoner in the Duomo with Baldassarre, or of learning what had taken place on the steps, except from Baldassarre himself; and if his father forgave, he would also consent to bury that offense.

But with this possibility of relief, by an easy spring, from present evil, there rose the other possibility, that the

fierce-hearted man might refuse to be propitiated. Well—and if he did, things would only be as they had been before; for there would be *no witness by*. It was not repentance with a white sheet round it and taper in hand, confessing its hated sin in the eyes of men, that Tito was preparing for: it was a repentance that would make all things pleasant again, and keep all past unpleasant things secret. And Tito's soft-heartedness, his indisposition to feel himself in harsh relations with any creature, was in strong activity toward his father, now his father was brought near to him. It would be a state of ease that his nature could not but desire, if the poisonous hatred in Baldassarre's glance could be replaced by something of the old affection and complacency.

Tito longed to have his world once again completely cushioned with goodwill, and longed for it the more eagerly because of what he had just suffered from the collision with Romola. It was not difficult to him to smile pleadingly on those whom he had injured, and offer to do them much kindness: and no quickness of intellect could tell him exactly the taste of that honey on the lips of the injured. The opportunity was there, and it raised an inclination which hemmed in the calculating activity of his thought. He started up, and stepped toward the door; but Tessa's cry, as she dropped her beads, roused him from his absorption. He turned and said—

“My Tessa, get me a lantern; and don't cry, little pigeon, I am not angry.”

They went down the stairs, and Tessa was going to shout the need of the lantern in Monna Lisa's ear, when Tito, who had opened the door, said, “Stay, Tessa—no, I want no lantern: go up-stairs again, and keep quiet, and say nothing to Monna Lisa.”

In half a minute he stood before the closed door of the outhouse, where the moon was shining white on the old paintless wood.

In this last decisive moment, Tito felt a tremor upon him—a sudden instinctive shrinking from a possible tiger-glance, possible tiger-leap. Yet why should he, a young man, be afraid of an old one? a young man with armor on, of an old man without a weapon? It was but a moment's hesitation, and Tito laid his hand on the door. Was his father asleep? Was there nothing else but the door that screened him from the voice and the glance which no magic could turn into ease?

Baldassarre was not asleep. There was a square opening high in the wall of the hovel, through which the moonbeams sent in a stream of pale light; and if Tito could have looked through the opening, he would have seen his father seated on the straw, with something that shone like a white star in his hand. Baldassarre was feeling the edge of his poinard, taking refuge in that sensation from a hopeless blank of thought that seemed to lie like a great gulf between his passion and its aim.

He was in one of his most wretched moments of conscious helplessness: he had been poring, while it was light, over the book that lay open beside him; then he had been trying to recall the names of his jewels, and the symbols engraved on them; and though at certain other times he had recovered some of those names and symbols, to-night they were all gone into darkness. And this effort at inward seeing had seemed to end in utter paralysis of memory. He was reduced to a sort of mad consciousness that he was a solitary pulse of just rage in a world filled with defiant baseness. He had clutched and unsheathed his dagger, and for a long while had been feeling its edge, his mind narrowed to one image, and the dream of one sensation—the sensation of plunging that dagger into a base heart, which he was unable to pierce in any other way.

Tito had his hand on the door and was pulling it; it dragged against the ground as such old doors often do, and Baldassarre, startled out of his dream-like state, rose from his sitting posture in vague amazement, not knowing where he was. He had not yet risen to his feet, and was still kneeling on one knee, when the door came wide open and he saw, dark against the moonlight, with the rays falling on one bright mass of curls and one rounded olive cheek, the image of his reverie—not shadowy—close and real like water at the lips after the thirsty dream of it. No thought could come athwart that eager thirst. In one moment, before Tito could start back, the old man, with the preternatural force of rage in his limbs, had sprung forward, and the dagger had flashed out. In the next moment the dagger had snapped in two, and Baldassarre, under the parrying force of Tito's arm, had fallen back on the straw, clutching the hilt with its bit of broken blade. The pointed end lay shinning against Tito's feet.

Tito had felt one great heart-leap of terror as he had staggered under the weight of the thrust; he felt now the triumph of deliverance and safety. His armor had been

proved, and vengeance lay helpless before him. But the triumph raised no devilish impulse; on the contrary, the sight of his father close to him and unable to injure him, made the effort at reconciliation easier. He was free from fear, but he had only the more unmixed and direct want to be free from the sense that he was hated. After they had looked at each other a little while, Baldassarre lying motionless in despairing rage, Tito said in his soft tones, just as they had sounded before the last parting on the shores of Greece—

“*Padre mio!*” There was a pause after those words, but no movement or sound till he said—

“I came to ask your forgiveness!”

Again he paused, that the healing balm of those words might have time to work. But there was no sign of change in Baldassarre; he lay as he had fallen, leaning on one arm: he was trembling, but it was from the shock that had thrown him down.

“I was taken by surprise that morning. I wish now to be a son to you again. I wish to make the rest of your life happy, that you may forget what you have suffered.”

He paused again. He had used the clearest and strongest words he could think of. It was useless to say more, until he had some sign that Baldassarre understood him. Perhaps his mind was too distempered or too imbecile even for that; perhaps the shock of his fall and his disappointed rage might have quite suspended the use of his faculties.

Presently Baldassarre began to move. He threw away the broken dagger, and slowly and gradually, still trembling, began to raise himself from the ground. Tito put out his hand to help him, and so strangely quick are men's souls that in this moment, when he began to feel his atonement was accepted, he had a darting thought of the irksome efforts it entailed. Baldassarre clutched the hand that was held out, raised himself and clutched it still, going close up to Tito till their faces were not a foot off each other. Then he began to speak, in a deep trembling voice—

“I saved you—I nurtured you—I loved you. You forsook me—you robbed me—you denied me. What can you give me? You have made the world bitterness to me; but there is one draught of sweetness left—that you shall know agony.”

He let fall Tito's hand, and going backwards a little,

first rested his arm on a projecting stone in the wall, and then sank again in a sitting posture on the straw. The outleap of fury in the dagger-thrust had evidently exhausted him.

Tito stood silent. If it had been a deep yearning emotion which had brought him to ask his father's forgiveness, the denial of it might have caused him a pang, which would have excluded the rushing train of thought that followed those decisive words. As it was, though the sentence of unchangeable hatred grated on him and jarred him terribly, his mind glanced round with a self-preserving instinct to see how far those words could have the force of a substantial threat. When he had come down to speak to Baldassarre, he had said to himself that if his effort at reconciliation failed, things would only be as they had been before. The first glance of his mind was backward to that thought again, but the future possibilities of danger that were conjured up along with it brought the perception that things were *not* as they had been before, and the perception came as a triumphant relief. There was not only the broken dagger, there was the certainty, from what Tessa had told him, that Baldassarre's mind was broken too, and had no edge that could reach him. Tito felt he had no choice now: he must defy Baldassarre as a mad, imbecile old man; and the chances were so strongly on his side that there was hardly room for fear. No; except the fear of having to do many unpleasant things in order to save himself from what was yet more unpleasant. And one of those unpleasant things must be done immediately: it was very difficult.

"Do you mean to stay here?" he said.

"No," said Baldassarre, bitterly, "you mean to turn me out."

"Not so," said Tito; "I only ask."

"I tell you, you have turned me out. If it is your straw, you turned me off it three years ago."

"Then you mean to leave this place?" said Tito, more anxious about this certainty than the ground of it.

"I have spoken," said Baldassarre.

Tito turned and re-entered the house. Monna Lisa was nodding; he went up to Tessa, and found her crying by the side of her baby.

"Tessa," he said, sitting down and taking her head between his hands; "leave off crying, little goose and listen to me."

He lifted her chin upward, that she might look at him, while he spoke very distinctly and emphatically.

"You must never speak to that old man again. He is a mad old man, and he wants to kill me. Never speak to him or listen to him again."

Tessa's tears had ceased, and her lips were pale with fright.

"Is he gone away?" she whispered.

"He will go away. Remember what I have said to you."

"Yes; I will never speak to a stranger any more," said Tessa, with a sense of guilt.

He told her, to comfort her, that he would come again to-morrow; and then went down to Monna Lisa to rebuke her severely for letting a dangerous man come about the house.

Tito felt that these were odious tasks; they were very evil-tasted morsels but they were forced upon him. He heard Monna Lisa fasten the door behind him, and turned away, without looking toward the open door of the hovel. He felt secure that Baldassarre would go, and he could not wait to see him go. Even *his* young frame and elastic spirit were shattered by the agitations that had been crowded into this single evening.

Baldassarre was still sitting on the straw when the shadow of Tito passed by. Before him lay the fragments of the broken dagger; beside him lay the open book, over which he had pored in vain. They looked like mocking symbols of his utter helplessness; and his body was still too trembling for him to rise and walk away.

But the next morning very early, when Tessa peeped anxiously through the hole in her shutter, the door of the hovel was open, and the strange old man was gone.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHAT FLORENCE WAS THINKING OF.

FOR several days Tito saw little of Romola. He told her gently, the next morning, that it would be better for her to remove any small articles of her own from the library, as there would be agents coming to pack up the antiquities. Then, leaning to kiss her on the brow, he

suggested that she should keep in her own room where the little painted tabernacle was, and where she was then sitting, so that she might be away from the noise of strange footsteps. Romola assented quietly, making no sign of emotion: the night had been one long waking to her, and, in spite of her healthy frame, sensation had become a dull continuous pain, as if she had been stunned and bruised. Tito divined that she felt ill, but he dared say no more; he only dared, perceiving that her hand and brow were stone cold, to fetch a furred mantle and throw it lightly round her. And in every brief interval that he returned to her, the scene was nearly the same: he tried to propitiate her by some unobtrusive act or word of tenderness, and she seemed to have lost the power of speaking to him, or of looking at him. "Patience!" he said to himself. "She will recover it, and forgive at last. The tie to me must still remain the strongest." When the stricken person is slow to recover and looks as if nothing had happened, the striker easily glides into the position of the aggrieved party; he feels no bruise himself, and is strongly conscious of his own amiable behavior since he inflicted the blow. But Tito was not naturally disposed to feel himself aggrieved; the constant bent of his mind was toward propitiation, and he would have submitted to much for the sake of feeling Romola's hand resting on his head again, as it did that morning when he first shrank from looking at her.

But he found it the less difficult to wait patiently for the return of his home happiness, because his life out of doors was more and more interesting to him. A course of action which is in strictness a slowly-prepared outgrowth of the entire character, is yet almost always traceable to a single impression as its point of apparent origin; and since that moment in the Piazza del Duomo, when Tito, mounted on the bales, had tasted a keen pleasure in the consciousness of his ability to tickle the ears of men with any phrases that pleased them, his imagination had glanced continually toward a sort of political activity which the troubled public life of Florence was likely enough to find occasion for. But the fresh dread of Baldassarre, waked in the same moment, had lain like an immovable rocky obstruction across that path, and had urged him into the sale of the library, as a preparation for the possible necessity of leaving Florence, at the very time when he was beginning to feel that it had a new attraction for him. That dread was nearly removed now: he must wear his armor still: he

must prepare himself for possible demands on his coolness and ingenuity, but he did not feel obliged to take the inconvenient step of leaving Florence and seeking new fortunes. His father had refused the offered atonement—had forced him into defiance; and an old man in a strange place, with his memory gone, was weak enough to be defied.

Tito's implicit desires were working themselves out now in very explicit thoughts. As the freshness of young passion faded, life was taking more and more decidedly for him the aspect of a game in which there was an agreeable mingling of skill and chance.

And the game that might be played in Florence promised to be rapid and exciting; it was a game of revolutionary and party struggle, sure to include plenty of that unavowed action in which brilliant ingenuity, able to get rid of all inconvenient beliefs, except that "ginger is hot in the mouth," is apt to see the path of superior wisdom.

No sooner were the French guests gone than Florence was as agitated as a colony of ants when an alarming shadow has been removed, and the camp has to be repaired. "How are we to raise the money for the French king? How are we to manage the war with those obstinate Pisan rebels? Above all, how are we to mend our plan of government, so as to hit on the best way of getting our magistrates chosen and our laws voted?" Till those questions were well answered, trade was in danger of standing still, and that large body of the working men who were not counted as citizens and had not so much as a vote to serve as an anodyne to their stomachs were likely to get impatient. Something must be done.

And first the great bell was sounded to call the citizens to a parliament in the Piazza de Signori; and when the crowd was wedged close, and hemmed in by armed men at all the outlets, the Signoria (or Gonfaloiere and eight Priors for the time being) came out and stood by the stone lion on the platform in front of the Old Palace, and proposed that twenty chief men of the city should have dictatorial authority given them, by force of which they should for one year choose all magistrates, and set the frame of government in order. And the people shouted their assent, and felt themselves the electors of the Twenty. This kind of "parliament" was a very old Florentine fashion, by which the will of the few was made to seem the choice of the many.

The shouting in the Piazza was soon at an end, but not so the debating inside the palace: was Florence to have a Great Council after the Venetian mode, where all the officers of government might be elected, and all laws voted by a wide number of citizens of a certain age and of ascertained qualifications, without question of rank or party? or, was it to be governed on a narrower and less popular scheme, in which the hereditary influence of good families would be less adulterated with the votes of shopkeepers. Doctors of law disputed day after day, and far on into the night. Messer Pagolantonio Soderini alleged excellent reasons on the side of the popular scheme; Messer Guidantonio Vespucci alleged reasons equally excellent on the side of a more aristocratic form. It was a question of boiled or roast, which had been prejudged by the palates of the disputants, and the excellent arguing might have been protracted a long while without any other result than that of deferring the cooking. The majority of the men inside the palace, having power already in their hands, agreed with Vespucci, and thought change should be moderate; the majority outside the palace, conscious of little power and many grievances, were less afraid of change.

And there was a force outside the palace which was gradually tending to give the vague desires of the majority the character of a determinate will. That force was the preaching of Savonarola. Impelled partly by the spiritual necessity that was laid upon him to guide the people, and partly by the prompting of public men who could get no measures carried without his aid, he was rapidly passing in his daily sermons from the general to the special—from telling his hearers that they must postpone their private passions and interests to the public good, to telling them precisely what sort of government they must have in order to promote that good—from “Choose whatever is best for all” to “Choose the Great Council,” and “the Great Council is the will of God.”

To Savonarola these were as good as identical propositions. The Great Council was the only practicable plan for giving an expression to the public will large enough to counteract the vitiating influence of party interests: it was a plan that would make honest impartial public action at least possible. And the purer the government of Florence would become—the more secure from the designs of men who saw their own advantage in the moral debasement of

their fellows—the nearer would the Florentine people approach the character of a pure community, worthy to lead the way in the renovation of the Church and the world. And Fra Girolamo's mind never stopped short of that sublimest end: the objects toward which he felt himself working had always the same moral magnificence. He had no private malice—he sought no petty gratification. Even in the last terrible days, when ignominy, torture, and the fear of torture, had laid bare every hidden weakness of his soul, he could say to his importunate judges: "Do not wonder if it seems to you that I have told but few things; for my purposes were few and great."*

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ARIADNE DISCROWNS HERSELF.

It was more than three weeks before the contents of the library were all packed and carried away. And Romola, instead of shutting her eyes and ears, had watched the process. The exhaustion consequent on violent emotion is apt to bring a dreamy disbelief in the reality of its cause; and in the evening, when the workmen were gone, Romola took her hand-lamp and walked slowly round amongst the confusion of straw and wooden cases, pausing at every vacant pedestal, every well-known object laid prostrate, with a sort of bitter desire to assure herself that there was a sufficient reason why her love was gone and the world was barren for her. And still, as the evenings came, she went and went again; no longer to assure herself, but because this vivifying of pain and despair about her father's memory was the strongest life left to her affections. On the twenty-third of December, she knew that the last packages were going. She ran to the loggia at the top of the house that she might not lose the last pang of seeing the slow wheels move across the bridge.

It was a cloudy day, and nearing dusk. Arno ran dark and shivering; the hills were mournful; and Florence with its girdling stone towers had that silent, tomb-like look, which unbroken shadow gives to a city seen from above.

* "Se vi pare che io abbia detto poche cose, non ve ne maravigliate, perché le mie cose erano poche e grandi."

Santa Croce, where her father lay, was dark amidst that darkness, and slowly crawling over the bridge, and slowly vanishing up the narrow street, was the white load, like a cruel, deliberate Fate carrying her father's lifelong hope to bury it in an unmarked grave. Romola felt less that she was seeing this herself than that her father was conscious of it as he lay helpless under the imprisoning stones, where her hand could not reach his to tell him that he was not alone.

She stood still even after the load had disappeared, heedless of the cold, and soothed by the gloom which seemed to cover her like a mourning garment and shut out the discord of joy. When suddenly the great bell in the palace-tower rang out a mighty peal: not the hammer-sound of alarm, but an agitated peal of triumph; and one after another every other bell in every other tower seemed to catch the vibration and join the chorus. And, as the chorus swelled and swelled till the air seemed made of sound—little flames, vibrating too, as if the sound had caught fire, burst out between the turrets of the palace and on the girdling towers.

That sudden clang, that leaping light, fell on Romola like sharp wounds. They were the triumph of demons at the success of her husband's treachery, and the desolation of her life. Little more than three weeks ago she had been intoxicated with the sound of those very bells; and in the gladness of Florence, she had heard a prophecy of her own gladness. But now the general joy seemed cruel to her: she stood aloof from that common life—that Florence which was flinging out its loud exultation to stun the ears of sorrow and loneliness. She could never join hands with gladness again, but only with those whom it was in the hard nature of gladness to forget. And in her bitterness she felt that all rejoicing was mockery. Men shouted pæans with their souls full of heaviness, and then looked in their neighbors' faces to see if there was really such a thing as joy. Romola had lost her belief in the happiness she had once thirsted for: it was a hateful, smiling, soft-handed thing, with a narrow, selfish heart.

She ran down from the loggia, with her hands pressed against her ears, and was hurrying across the antechamber, when she was startled by unexpectedly meeting her husband, who was coming to seek her.

His step was elastic, and there was a radiance of satisfaction about him not quite usual.

"What! the noise was a little too much for you?" he said; for Romola, as she started at the sight of him, had pressed her hands all the closer against her ears. He took her gently by the wrist, and drew her arm within his, leading her into the saloon surrounded with the dancing nymphs and fauns, and then went on speaking: "Florence is gone quite mad at getting its Great Council, which is to put an end to all the evils under the sun; especially the vice of merriment. You may well look stunned, my Romola, and you are cold. You must not stay so late under that windy loggia without wrappings. I was coming to tell you that I am suddenly called to Rome about some learned business for Bernardo Rucellai. I am going away immediately, for I am to join my party at San Gaggio to-night, that we may start early in the morning. I need give you no trouble; I have had my packages made already. It will not be very long before I am back again."

He knew he had nothing to expect from her but quiet endurance of what he said and did. He could not even venture to kiss her brow this evening, but just pressed her hand to his lips, and left her. Tito felt that Romola was a more unforgiving woman than he had imagined; her love was not that sweet clinging instinct, stronger than all judgments, which he began to see now, made the great charm of a wife. Still this petrified coldness was better than a passionate, futile opposition. Her pride and capability of seeing where resistance was useless had their convenience.

But when the door had closed on Tito, Romola lost the look of cold immobility which came over her like an inevitable frost whenever he approached her. Inwardly she was very far from being in a state of quiet endurance, and the days that had passed since the scene which had divided her from Tito, had been days of active planning and preparation for the fulfillment of a purpose.

The first thing she did now was to call old Maso to her.

"Maso," she said, in a decided tone, "we take our journey to-morrow morning. We shall be able now to overtake that first convoy of cloth, while they are waiting at San Piero. See about the two mules to-night, and be ready to set off with them at break of day, and wait for me at Trespiano."

She meant to take Maso with her as far as Bologna, and then send him back with letters to her godfather and Tito, telling them that she was gone and never meant to return. She had planned her departure so that its secrecy might

be perfect, and her broken love and life be hidden away unscanned by vulgar eyes. Bernardo del Nero had been absent at his villa, willing to escape from political suspicions to his favorite occupation of attending to his land, and she had paid him the debt without a personal interview. He did not even know that the library was sold, and was left to conjecture that some sudden piece of good fortune had enabled Tito to raise this sum of money. Maso had been taken into her confidence only so far that he knew her intended journey was a secret; and to do just what she told him was the thing he cared most for in his withered wintry age.

Romola did not mean to go to bed that night. When she had fastened the door she took her taper to the carved and painted chest which contained her wedding clothes. The white silk and gold lay there, the long white veil and the circlet of pearls. A great sob rose as she looked at them: they seemed the shroud of her dead happiness. In a tiny gold loop of the circlet a sugar-plum had lodged—a pink hailstone from the shower of sweets; Tito had detected it first, and had said that it should always remain there. At certain moments—and this was one of them—Romola was carried, by a sudden wave of memory, back again into the time of perfect trust, and felt again the presence of the husband whose love made the world as fresh and wonderful to her as to a little child that sits in stillness among the sunny flowers: heard the gentle tones and saw the soft eyes without any lie in them, and breathed again that large freedom of the soul which comes from the faith that the being who is nearest to us is greater than ourselves. And in those brief moments the tears always rose: the woman's lovingness felt something akin to what the bereaved mother feels when the tiny fingers seem to lie warm on her bosom, and yet are marble to her lips as she bends over the silent bed.

But there was something else lying in the chest besides the wedding clothes: it was something dark and coarse, rolled up in a close bundle. She turned away her eyes from the white and gold to the dark bundle, and as her hands touched the serge, her tears began to be checked. That coarse roughness recalled her fully to the present, from which love and delight were gone. She unfastened the thick white cord and spread the bundle out on the table. It was the gray serge dress of a sister belonging to the third order of St. Francis, living in the world but

especially devoted to deeds of piety—a personage whom the Florentines were accustomed to call a Pinzochera. Romola was going to put on this dress as a disguise, and she determined to put it on at once, so that, if she needed sleep before the morning, she might wake up in perfect readiness to be gone. She put off her black garment, and as she thrust her soft white arms into the harsh sleeves of the serge mantle and felt the hard girdle of rope hurt her fingers as she tied it, she courted those rude sensations: they were in keeping with her new scorn of that thing called pleasure which made men base—that dexterous contrivance for selfish ease, that shrinking from endurance and strain, when others were bowing beneath burdens too heavy for them, which now made one image with her husband.

Then she gathered her long hair together, drew it away tight from her face, bound it in a great hard knot at the back of her head, and taking a square piece of black silk, tied it in the fashion of a kerchief close across her head and under her chin; and over that she drew the cowl. She lifted the candle to the mirror. Surely her disguise would be complete to any one who had not lived very near to her. To herself she looked strangely like her brother Dino: the full oval of the cheek had only to be wasted; the eyes, already sad, had only to become a little sunken. Was she getting more like him in anything else? Only in this, that she understood now how men could be prompted to rush away forever from earthly delights, how they could be prompted to dwell on images of sorrow rather than of beauty and joy.

But she did not linger at the mirror: she set about collecting and packing all the relics of her father and mother that were too large to be carried in her small traveling-wallet. They were all to be put into the chest along with her wedding-clothes, and the chest was to be committed to her godfather when she was safely gone. First she laid in the portraits; then one by one every little thing that had a sacred memory clinging to it was put into her wallet or into the chest.

She paused. There was still something else to be stripped away from her, belonging to that past on which she was going to turn her back forever. She put her thumb and her forefinger to her betrothal ring; but they rested there, without drawing it off. Romola's mind had been rushing with an impetuous current toward this act, for which she

was preparing: the act of quitting a husband who had disappointed all her trust, the act of breaking an outward tie that no longer represented the inward bond of love. But that force of outward symbols by which our active life is knit together so as to make an inexorable external identity for us, not to be shaken by our wavering consciousness, gave a strange effect to this simple movement toward taking off her ring—a movement which was but a small sequence of her energetic resolution. It brought a vague but arresting sense that she was somehow violently rending her life in two: a presentiment that the strong impulse which had seemed to exclude doubt and make her path clear might after all be blindness, and that there was something in human bonds which must prevent them from being broken with the breaking of illusions.

If that beloved Tito who had placed the betrothal ring on her finger was not in any valid sense the same Tito whom she had ceased to love, why should she return to him the sign of their union, and not rather retain it as a memorial? And this act, which came as a palpable demonstration of her own and his identity, had a power unexplained to herself, of shaking Romola. It is the way with half the truth amidst which we live, that it only haunts us and makes dull pulsations that are never born into sound. But there was a passionate voice speaking within her that presently nullified all such muffled murmurs.

“It cannot be! I cannot be subject to him. He is false. I shrink from him. I despise him!”

She snatched the ring from her finger and laid it on the table against the pen with which she meant to write. Again she felt that there could be no law for her but the law of her affections. That tenderness and keen fellow-feeling for the near and the loved which are the main outgrowth of the affections, had made the religion of her life: they had made her patient in spite of natural impetuosity; they would have sufficed to make her heroic. But now all that strength was gone, or, rather, it was converted into the strength of repulsion. She had recoiled from Tito in proportion to the energy of that young belief and love which he had disappointed, of that life-long devotion to her father against which he had committed an irredeemable offense. And it seemed as if all motive had slipped away from her, except the indignation and scorn that made her tear herself asunder from him.

She was not acting after any precedent, or obeying any

adopted maxims. The grand severity of the stoical philosophy in which her father had taken care to instruct her, was familiar enough to her ears and lips, and its lofty spirit had raised certain echoes within her; but she had never used it, never needed it as a rule of life. She had endured and forborne because she loved: maxims which told her to feel less, and not to cling close lest the onward course of great nature should jar her, had been as powerless on her tenderness as they had been on her father's yearning for just fame. She had appropriated no theories: she had simply felt strong in the strength of affection, and life without that energy came to her as an entirely new problem.

She was going to solve the problem in a way that seemed to her very simple. Her mind had never yet bowed to any obligation apart from personal love and reverence; she had no keen sense of any other human relations, and all she had to obey now was the instinct to sever herself from the man she loved no longer.

Yet the unswerving resolution was accompanied with continually varying phases of anguish. And now that the active preparation for her departure was almost finished, she lingered: she deferred writing the irrevocable words of parting from all her little world. The emotions of the past weeks seemed to rush in again with cruel hurry, and take possession even of her limbs. She was going to write, and her hand fell. Bitter tears came now at the delusion which had blighted her young years: tears very different from the sob of remembered happiness with which she had looked at the circlet of pearls and the pink hailstone. And now she felt a tingling of shame at the words of ignominy she had cast at Tito — "Have you robbed some one else who is *not* dead?" To have had such words wrung from her — to have uttered them to her husband seemed a degradation of her whole life. Hard speech between those who have loved is hideous in the memory, like the sight of greatness and beauty sunk into vice and rags.

The heart-cutting comparison of the present with the past urged itself upon Romola till it even transformed itself into wretched sensations: she seemed benumbed to everything but inward throbbings, and began to feel the need of some hard contact. She drew her hands tight along the harsh, knotted cord that hung from her waist. She started to her feet and seized the rough lid of the

chest: there was nothing else to go in? No. She closed the lid, pressing her hand upon the rough carving, and locked it.

Then she remembered that she had still to complete her equipment as a Pinzochera. The large leather purse or *scarsella*, with small coin in it, had to be hung on the cord at her waist (her florins and small jewels, presents from her godfather and cousin Brigida, were safely fastened within her serge mantle), and on the other side must hang the rosary.

It did not occur to Romola, as she hung that rosary by her side, that something else besides the mere garb would perhaps be necessary to enable her to pass as a Pinzochera, and that her whole air and expression were as little as possible like those of a sister whose eyelids were used to be bent, and whose lips were used to move in silent iteration. Her inexperience prevented her from picturing distant details, and it helped her proud courage in shutting out any foreboding of danger and insult. She did not know that any Florentine woman had ever done exactly what she was going to do: unhappy wives often took refuge with their friends, or in the cloister, she knew, but both those courses were impossible to her; she had invented a lot for herself—to go to the most learned woman in the world, Cassandra Fedele, at Venice, and ask her how an instructed woman could support herself in a lonely life there.

She was not daunted by the practical difficulties in the way or the dark uncertainty at the end. Her life could never be happy any more, but it must not, could not, be ignoble. And by a pathetic mixture of childish romance with her woman's trials, the philosophy which had nothing to do with this great decisive deed of hers had its place in her imagination of the future: so far as she conceived her solitary, loveless life at all, she saw it animated by a proud, stoical heroism, and by an indistinct but strong purpose of labor, that she might be wise enough to write something which would rescue her father's name from oblivion. After all, she was only a young girl—this poor Romola, who had found herself at the end of her joys.

There were other things yet to be done. There was a small key in a casket on the table—but now Romola perceived that her taper was dying out, and she had forgotten to provide herself with any other light. In a few moments the room was in total darkness. Feeling her way to the nearest chair, she sat down to wait for the morning.

Her purpose in seeking the key had called up certain memories which had come back upon her during the past week with the new vividness that remembered words always have for us when we have learned to give them a new meaning. Since the shock of the revelation which had seemed to divide her forever from Tito, that last interview with Dino had never been for many hours together out of her mind. And it solicited her all the more, because while its remembered images pressed upon her almost with the imperious force of sensations, they raised struggling thoughts which resisted their influence. She could not prevent herself from hearing inwardly the dying prophetic voice saying again and again—"The man whose face was a blank loosed thy hand and departed; and as he went, I could see his face, and it was the face of the great Tempter —. And thou, Romola, didst wring thy hands and seek for water, and there was none — and the plain was bare and stony again, and thou wast alone in the midst of it. And then it seemed that the night fell, and I saw no more." She could not prevent herself from dwelling with a sort of agonized fascination on the wasted face; on the straining gaze at the crucifix; on the awe which had compelled her to kneel; on the last broken words and then the unbroken silence—on all the details of the death-scene, which had seemed like a sudden opening into a world apart from that of her life-long knowledge.

But her mind was roused to resistance of impressions that, from being obvious phantoms, seemed to be getting solid in the daylight. As a strong body struggles against fumes with the more violence when they begin to be stifling, a strong soul struggles against phantasies with all the more alarmed energy when they threaten to govern in the place of thought.

What had the words of that vision to do with her real sorrows? That fitting of certain words was a mere chance; the rest was all vague—nay, those words themselves were vague; they were determined by nothing but her brother's memories and beliefs. He believed there was something fatal in pagan learning; he believed that celibacy was more holy than marriage; he remembered their home, and all the objects in the library; and of these threads the vision was woven. What reasonable warrant could she have had for believing in such a vision and acting on it? None. True as the voice of foreboding

had proved, Romola saw with unshaken conviction that to have renounced Tito in obedience to a warning like that, would have been meagre-hearted folly. Her trust had been delusive, but she would have chosen over again to have acted on it rather than be a creature led by phantoms and disjointed whispers in a world where there was the large music of reasonable speech, and the warm grasp of living hands.

"But the persistent presence of these memories, linking themselves in her imagination with her actual lot, gave her a glimpse of understanding into the lives which had before lain utterly aloof from her sympathy—the lives of the men and women who were led by such inward images and voices.

"If they were only a little stronger in me," she said to herself, "I should lose the sense of what that vision really was, and take it for a prophetic light. I might in time get to be a seer of visions myself, like the Suora Maddalena, and Camilla Rucellai, and the rest."

Romola shuddered at the possibility. All the instruction, all the main influences of her life had gone to fortify her scorn of that sickly superstition which led men and women, with eyes too weak for the daylight, to sit in dark swamps and try to read human destiny by the chance flame of wandering vapors.

And yet she was conscious of something deeper than that coincidence of words which made the parting contact with her dying brother live anew in her mind, and gave a new sisterhood to the wasted face. If there were much more of such experience as his in the world, she would like to understand it—would even like to learn the thoughts of men who sank in ecstasy before the pictured agonies of martyrdom. There seemed to be something more than madness in the supreme fellowship with suffering. The springs were all dried up around her; she wondered what other waters there were at which men drank and found strength in the desert. And those moments in the Duomo when she had sobbed with a mysterious mingling of rapture and pain, while Fra Girolamo offered himself a willing sacrifice for the people, came back to her as if they had been a transient taste of some such far-off fountain. But again she shrank from impressions that were alluring her within the sphere of visions and narrow fears which compelled men to outrage natural affections as Dino had done.

This was the tangled web that Romola had in her mind as she sat weary in the darkness. No radiant angel came

across the gloom with a clear message for her. In those times, as now, there were human beings who never saw angels or heard perfectly clear messages. Such truth as came to them was brought confusedly in the voices and deeds of men not at all like the seraphs of unfailing wing and piercing vision—men who believed falsities as well as truths, and did the wrong as well as the right. The helping hands stretched out to them were the hands of men who stumbled and often saw dimly, so that these beings unvisited by angels had no other choice than to grasp that stumbling guidance along the path of reliance and action which is the path of life, or else to pause in loneliness and disbelief, which is no path, but the arrest of inaction and death.

And so Romola, seeing no ray across the darkness, and heavy with conflict that changed nothing, sank at last to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE TABERNACLE UNLOCKED.

ROMOLA was waked by a tap at the door. The cold light of early morning was in the room, and Maso was come for the traveling wallet. The old man could not help starting when she opened the door, and showed him, instead of the graceful outline he had been used to, crowned with the brightness of her hair, the thick folds of the gray mantle and the pale face shadowed by the dark cowl.

“It is well, Maso,” said Romola, trying to speak in the calmest voice, and make the old man easy. “Here is the wallet quite ready. You will go on quietly, and I shall not be far behind you. When you get out of the gates you may go more slowly, for I shall perhaps join you before you get to Trespiano.”

She closed the door behind him, and then put her hand on the key which she had taken from the casket the last thing in the night. It was the original key of the little painted tabernacle: Tito had forgotten to drown it in the Arno, and it had lodged, as such small things will, in the corner of the embroidered scarsella which he wore with the purple tunic. One day, long after their marriage,

Romola had found it there, and had put it by, without using it, but with a sense of satisfaction that the key was within reach. The cabinet on which the tabernacle stood had been moved to the side of the room, close to one of the windows, where the pale morning light fell upon it so as to make the painted forms discernible enough to Romola, who knew them well,—the triumphant Bacchus, with his clusters and his vine-clad spear, clasping the crowned Ariadne; the Loves showering roses, the wreathed vessel, the cunning-eyed dolphins, and the rippled sea: all encircled by a flowery border, like a bower of paradise. Romola looked at the familiar images with new bitterness and repulsion: they seemed a more pitiable mockery than ever on this chill morning, when she had waked up to wander in loneliness. They had been no tomb of sorrow, but a lying screen. Foolish Ariadne! with her gaze of love, as if that bright face, with its hyacinthe curls like tendrils among the vines, held the deep secret of her life!

“Ariadne is wonderfully transformed,” thought Romola. “She would look strange among the vines and the roses now.”

She took up the mirror, and looked at herself once more. But the sight was so startling in this morning light that she laid it down again, with a sense of shrinking almost as strong as that with which she had turned from the joyous Ariadne. The recognition of her own face, with the cowl about it, brought back the dread lest she should be drawn at last into fellowship with some wretched superstition—into the company of the howling fanatics and weeping nuns who had been her contempt from childhood till now. She thrust the key into the tabernacle hurriedly: hurriedly she opened it, and took out the crucifix, without looking at it; then, with trembling fingers, she passed a cord through the little ring, hung the crucifix round her neck, and hid it in the bosom of her mantle. “For Dino’s sake,” she said to herself.

Still there were the letters to be written which Maso was to carry back from Bologna. They were very brief. The first said—

“Tito, my love for you is dead; and therefore, so far as I was yours, I too am dead. Do not try to put in force any laws for the sake of fetching me back: that would bring you no happiness. The Romola you married can never return. I need explain nothing to you after the words I uttered to you the last time we spoke long together.

If you supposed them to be words of transient anger, you will know now that they were the sign of an irreversible change.

"I think you will fulfill my wish that my bridal chest should be sent to my godfather, who gave it me. It contains my wedding-clothes and the portraits and other relics of my father and mother."

She folded the ring inside this letter, and wrote Tito's name outside. The next letter was to Bernardo del Nero:—

DEAREST GODFATHER,—If I could have been any good to your life by staying I would not have gone away to a distance. But now I am gone. Do not ask the reason; and if you love my father, try to prevent any one from seeking me. I could not bear my life at Florence. I cannot bear to tell any one why. Help to cover my lot in silence. I have asked that my bridal chest should be sent to you: when you open it, you will know the reason. Please to give all the things that were my mother's to my cousin Brigida, and ask her to forgive me for not saying any words of parting to her.

Farewell, my second father. The best thing I have in life is still to remember your goodness and be grateful to you. ROMOLA.

Romola put the letters, along with the crucifix, within the bosom of her mantle, and then felt that everything was done. She was ready now to depart.

No one was stirring in the house, and she went almost as quietly as a gray phantom down the stairs and into the silent street. Her heart was palpitating violently, yet she enjoyed the sense of her firm tread on the broad flags—of the swift movement which was like a chained-up resolution set free at last. The anxiety to carry out her act, and the dread of any obstacle, averted sorrow; and as she reached the Ponte Rubaconte, she felt less that Santa Croce was in her sight than that the yellow streak of morning which parted the gray was getting broader and broader, and that, unless she hastened her steps, she should have to encounter faces.

Her simplest road was to go right on to the Borgo Pinti, and then along by the walls to the Porta San Gallo, from which she must leave the city, and this road carried her by the Piazza di Santa Croce. But she walked as steadily and rapidly as ever through the piazza, not trusting herself to look toward the church. The thought that any eyes might be turned on her with a look of curiosity and recognition, and that indifferent minds might be set speculating on her private sorrows, made Romola shrink

physically as from the imagination of torture. She felt degraded even by that act of her husband from which she was helplessly suffering. But there was no sign that any eyes looked forth from windows to notice this tall gray sister, with the firm step, and proud attitude of the cowled head. Her road lay aloof from the stir of early traffic, and when she reached the Porta San Gallo, it was easy to pass while a dispute was going forward about the toll for panniers of eggs and market produce which were just entering.

Out! Once past the houses of the Borgo, she would be beyond the last fringe of Florence, the sky would be broad above her, and she would have entered on her new life—a life of loneliness and endurance, but of freedom. She had been strong enough to snap asunder the bonds she had accepted in blind faith: whatever befell her, she would no more feel the breath of soft hated lips warm upon her cheek, no longer feel the breath of an odious mind stifling her own. The bare wintry morning, the chill air, were welcome in their severity: the leafless trees, the sombre hills, were not haunted by the gods of beauty and joy, whose worship she had forsaken forever.

But presently the light burst forth with sudden strength, and shadows were thrown across the road. It seemed that the sun was going to chase away the grayness. The light is perhaps never felt more strongly as a divine presence stirring all those inarticulate sensibilities which are our deepest life, than in these moments when it instantaneously awakens the shadows. A certain awe which inevitably accompanied this most momentous act of her life became a more conscious element in Romola's feeling as she found herself in the sudden presence of the impalpable golden glory and the long shadow of herself that was not to be escaped. Hitherto she had met no one but an occasional contadino with mules, and the many turnings of the road on the level prevented her from seeing that Maso was not very far ahead of her. But when she had passed Pietra and was on rising ground, she lifted up the hanging roof of her cowl and looked eagerly before her.

The cowl was dropped again immediately. She had seen, not Maso, but—two monks, who were approaching within a few yards of her. The edge of her cowl making a pent-house on her brow had shut out the objects above the level of her eyes, and for the last few moments she had been looking at nothing but the brightness on the

path and at her own shadow, tall and shrouded like a dread spectre.

She wished now that she had not looked up. Her disguise made her especially dislike to encounter monks: they might expect some pious passwords of which she knew nothing, and she walked along with a careful appearance of unconsciousness till she had seen the skirts of the black mantles pass by her. The encounter had made her heart beat disagreeably, for Romola had an uneasiness in her religious disguise, a shame at this studied concealment, which was made more distinct by a special effort to appear unconscious under actual glances.

But the black skirts would be gone the faster because they were going down-hill; and seeing a great flat stone against a cypress that rose from a projecting green bank, she yielded to the desire which the slight shock had given her, to sit down and rest.

She turned her back on Florence, not meaning to look at it till the monks were quite out of sight; and raising the edge of her cowl again when she had seated herself, she discerned Maso and the mules at a distance where it was not hopeless for her to overtake them, as the old man would probably linger in expectation of her.

Meanwhile she might pause a little. She was free and alone.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE BLACK MARKS BECOME MAGICAL.

THAT journey of Tito's to Rome, which had removed many difficulties from Romola's departure, had been resolved on quite suddenly, at a supper, only the evening before.

Tito had set out toward that supper with agreeable expectations. The meats were likely to be delicate, the wines choice, the company distinguished; for the place of entertainment was the Selva or Orto de Rucellai, or, as we should say, the Rucellai Gardens; and the host, Bernardo Rucellai, was quite a typical Florentine grandee. Even his family name has a significance which is prettily symbolic: properly understood, it may bring before us a little lichen, popularly named *orcella* or *roccella*, which grows on

the rocks of Greek isles and in the Canaries; and having drunk a great deal of light into its little stems and button-heads, will, under certain circumstances, give it out again as a reddish purple dye, very grateful to the eyes of men. By bringing the excellent secret of this dye, called *oricello*, from the Levant to Florence, a certain merchant, who lived nearly a hundred years before our Bernardo's time, won for himself and his descendants much wealth, and the pleasantly-suggestive surname of Oricellari, or Roccellari, which on Tuscan tongues speedily became Rucellai.

And our Bernardo, who stands out more prominently than the rest on this purple background, had added all sorts of distinction to the family name: he had married the sister of Lorenzo de Medici, and had had the most splendid wedding in the memory of Florentine upholstery; and for these and other virtues he had been sent on embassies to France and Venice, and had been chosen Gonfaloniere; he had not only built himself a fine palace, but had finished putting the black and white marble façade to the church of Santa Maria Novella; he had planted a garden with rare trees, and had made it classic ground by receiving within it the meetings of the Platonic Academy, orphaned by the death of Lorenzo; he had written an excellent, learned book, of a new topographical sort, about ancient Rome; he had collected antiquities; he had a pure Latinity. The simplest account of him, one sees, reads like a laudatory epitaph, at the end of which the Greek and Ausonian Muses might be confidently requested to tear their hair, and Nature to desist from any second attempt to combine so many virtues with one set of viscera.

His invitation had been conveyed to Tito through Lorenzo Tornabuoni, with an emphasis which would have suggested that the object of the gathering was political, even if the public questions of the time had been less absorbing. As it was, Tito felt sure that some party purposes were to be furthered by the excellent flavors of stewed fish and old Greek wine; for Bernardo Rucellai was not simply an influential personage, he was one of the elect Twenty who for three weeks had held the reigns of Florence. This assurance put Tito in the best spirits as he made his way to the Via della Scala, where the classic garden was to be found: without it, he might have had some uneasy speculation as to whether the high company he would have the honor of meeting was likely to be dull as well as distinguished; for he had had experience of various

dull suppers even in the Rucellai gardens, and especially of the dull philosophic sort, wherein he had not only been called upon to accept an entire scheme of the universe (which would have been easy to him), but to listen to an exposition of the same, from the origin of things to their complete ripeness in the tractate of the philosopher then speaking.

It was a dark evening, and it was only when Tito crossed the occasional light of a lamp suspended before an image of the Virgin, that the outline of his figure was discernible enough for recognition. At such moments any one caring to watch his passage from one of these lights to another might have observed that the tall and graceful personage with the mantle folded round him was followed constantly by a very different form, thick-set and elderly, in a serge tunic and felt hat. The conjunction might have been taken for mere chance, since there were many passengers along the streets at this hour. But when Tito stopped at the gate of the Rucellai gardens, the figure behind stopped too. The *sportello*, or smaller door of the gate was already being held open by the servant, who, in the distraction of attending to some question, had not yet closed it since the last arrival, and Tito turned in rapidly, giving his name to the servant, and passing on between the evergreen bushes that shone like metal in the torchlight. The follower turned in too.

"Your name?" said the servant.

"Baldassarre Calvo," was the immediate answer.

"You are not a guest; the guests have all passed."

"I belong to Tito Melema, who has just gone in. I am to wait in the gardens."

The servant hesitated. "I had orders to admit only guests. Are you a servant of Messer Tito?"

"No, friend, I am not a servant; I am a scholar."

There are men to whom you need only say, "I am a buffalo," in a certain tone of quiet confidence, and they will let you pass. The porter gave way at once, Baldassarre entered, and heard the door closed and chained behind him, as he too disappeared among the shining bushes.

Those ready and firm answers argued a great change in Baldassarre since the last meeting face to face with Tito, when the dagger broke in two. The change had declared itself in a startling way.

At the moment when the shadow of Tito passed in front

of the hovel as he departed homeward, Baldassarre was sitting in that state of after-tremor known to every one who is liable to great outbursts of passion: a state in which physical powerlessness is sometimes accompanied by an exceptional lucidity of thought, as if that disengagement of excited passion had carried away a fire-mist and left clearness behind it. He felt unable to rise and walk away just yet; his limbs seemed benumbed; he was cold, and his hands shook. But in that bodily helplessness he sat surrounded, not by the habitual dimness and vanishing shadows, but by the clear images of the past; he was living again in an unbroken course through that life which seemed a long preparation for the taste of bitterness.

For some minutes he was too thoroughly absorbed by the images to reflect on the fact that he saw them, and note the fact as a change. But when that sudden clearness had traveled through the distance, and came at last to rest on the scene just gone by, he felt fully where he was: he remembered Monna Lisa and Tessa. Ah! *he* then was the mysterious husband; he who had another wife in the Via de Bardi. It was time to pick up the broken dagger and go—go and leave no trace of himself; for to hide his feebleness seemed the thing most like power that was left to him. He leaned to take up the fragments of the dagger; then he turned toward the book which lay open at his side. It was a fine large manuscript, an odd volume of Pausanias. The moonlight was upon it, and he could see the large letters at the head of the page:

MEZZHNIKA. KB'.

In old days he had known Pausanias familiarly; yet an hour or two ago he had been looking hopelessly at that page, and it had suggested no more meaning to him than if the letters had been black weather-marks on a wall; but at this moment they were once more the magic signs that conjure up a world. That moonbeam falling on the letters had raised Messenia before him, and its struggle against the Spartan oppression.

He snatched up the book, but the light was too pale for him to read further by. No matter: he knew that chapter; he read inwardly. He saw the stoning of the traitor Aristocrates—stoned by a whole people, who cast him out from their borders to lie unburied, and set up a pillar with verses upon it telling how Time had brought home justice to the unjust. The words arose within him, and stirred

innumerable vibrations of memory. He forgot that he was old: he could almost have shouted. The light was come again, mother of knowledge and joy! In that exultation his limbs recovered their strength: he started up with his broken dagger and book, and went out under the broad moonlight.

It was a nipping frosty air, but Baldassarre could feel no chill—he only felt the glow of conscious power. He walked about and paused on all the open spots of that high ground, and looked down on the domed and towered city, sleeping darkly under its sleeping guardians, the mountains; on the pale gleam of the river; on the valley vanishing toward the peaks of snow; and felt himself master of them all.

That sense of mental empire which belongs to us all in moments of exceptional clearness was intensified for him by the long days and nights in which memory had been little more than the consciousness of something gone. That city, which had been a weary labyrinth, was material that he could subdue to his purposes now: his mind glanced through its affairs with flashing conjecture; he was once more a man who knew cities, whose sense of vision was instructed with large experience, and who felt the keen delight of holding all things in the grasp of language. Names! Images!—his mind rushed through its wealth without pausing, like one who enters on a great inheritance.

But amidst all that rushing eagerness there was one End presiding in Baldassarre's consciousness,—a dark deity in the inmost cell, who only seemed forgotten while his hecatomb was being prepared. And when the first triumph in the certainty of recovered power had had its way, his thoughts centered themselves on Tito. That fair slippery viper could not escape him now; thanks to struggling justice, the heart that never quivered with tenderness for another had its sensitive selfish fibres that could be reached by the sharp point of anguish. The soul that bowed to no right, bowed to the great lord of mortals, Pain.

He could search into every secret of Tito's life now: he knew some of the secrets already, and the failure of the broken dagger, which seemed like frustration, had been the beginning of achievement. Doubtless that sudden rage had shaken away the obstruction which stifled his soul. Twice before, when his memory had partially returned, it had been in consequence of sudden excitation: once when he had to defend himself from an enraged dog: once when

he had been overtaken by the waves, and had had to scramble up a rock to save himself.

Yes, but if this time, as then, the light were to die out, and the dreary conscious blank come back again! This time the light was stronger and steadier; but what security was there that before the morrow the dark fog would not be round him again? Even the fear seemed like the beginning of feebleness: he thought with alarm that he might sink the faster for this excited vigil of his on the hill, which was expending his force; and after seeking anxiously for a sheltered corner where he might lie down, he nestled at last against a heap of warm garden straw, and so fell asleep.

When he opened his eyes again it was daylight. The first moments were filled with strange bewilderment: he was a man with a double identity: to which had he awaked? to the life of dim-sighted sensibilities like the sad heirship of some fallen greatness, or to the life of recovered power? Surely the last, for the events of the night all came back to him: the recognition of the page in Pausanias, the crowding resurgence of facts and names, the sudden wide prospect which had given him such a moment as that of the Mænad in the glorious amaze of her morning waking on the mountain top.

He took up the book again, he read, he remembered without reading. He saw a name, and the images of deeds rose with it: he saw the mention of a deed, and he linked it with a name. There were stories of inexpiable crimes, but stories also of guilt that seemed successful. There were sanctuaries for swift-footed miscreants: baseness had its armor, and the weapons of justice sometimes broke against it. What then? If baseness triumphed everywhere else, if it could heap to itself all the goods of the world and even hold the keys of hell, it would never triumph over the hatred which it had itself awakened. It could devise no torture that would seem greater than the torture of submitting to its smile. Baldassarre felt the indestructible independent force of a supreme emotion, which knows no terror, and asks for no motive, which is itself an ever-burning motive, consuming all other desire. And now in this morning light, when the assurance came again that the fine fibres of association were active still, and that his recovered self had not departed, all his gladness was but the hope of vengeance.

From that time till the evening on which we have seen

him enter the Rucellai gardens, he had been incessantly, but cautiously, inquiring into Tito's position and all his circumstances, and there was hardly a day on which he did not contrive to follow his movements. But he wished not to arouse any alarm in Tito: he wished to secure a moment when the hated favorite of blind fortune was at the summit of confident ease, surrounded by chief men on whose favor he depended. It was not any retributive payment or recognition of himself for his own behoof, on which Baldassarre's whole soul was bent: it was to find the sharpest edge of disgrace and shame by which a selfish smiler could be pierced; it was to send through his marrow the most sudden shock of dread. He was content to lie hard, and live stintedly—he had spent the greater part of his remaining money in buying another poniard: his hunger and his thirst were after nothing exquisite but an exquisite vengeance. He had avoided addressing himself to any one whom he suspected of intimacy with Tito, lest an alarm raised in Tito's mind should urge him either to flight or to some other counteracting measure which hard-pressed ingenuity might devise. For this reason he had never entered Nello's shop, which he observed that Tito frequented, and he had turned aside to avoid meeting Piero di Cosimo.

The possibility of frustration gave added eagerness to his desire that the great opportunity he sought should not be deferred. The desire was eager in him on another ground; he trembled lest his memory should go again. Whether from the agitating presence of that fear, or from some other causes, he had twice felt a sort of mental dizziness, in which the inward sense or imagination seemed to be losing the distinct forms of things. Once he had attempted to enter the Palazzo Vecchio and make his way into a council-chamber where Tito was, and had failed. But now, on this evening, he felt that his occasion was come.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A SUPPER IN THE RUCELLAI GARDENS.

ON entering the handsome pavilion, Tito's quick glance soon discerned in the selection of the guests the confirmation of his conjecture that the object of the gathering was political, though, perhaps, nothing more distinct than that strengthening of party which comes from good-fellowship. Good dishes and good wine were at that time believed to heighten the consciousness of political preferences, and in the inspired ease of after-supper talk it was supposed that people ascertained their own opinions with a clearness quite inaccessible to uninvited stomachs. The Florentines were a sober and frugal people; but wherever men have gathered wealth, Madonna della Gozzoviglia and San Buonvino have had their worshipers; and the Rucellai were among the few Florentine families who kept a great table and lived splendidly. It was not probable that on this evening there would be any attempt to apply high philosophic theories; and there could be no objection to the bust of Plato looking on, or even to the modest presence of the cardinal virtues in fresco on the walls.

That bust of Plato had been long used to look down on conviviality of a more transcendental sort, for it had been brought from Lorenzo's villa after his death, when the meetings of the Platonic Academy had been transferred to these gardens. Especially on every thirteenth of November, reputed anniversary of Plato's death, it had looked down from under laurel leaves on a picked company of scholars and philosophers, who met to eat and drink with moderation, and to discuss and admire, perhaps with less moderation, the doctrines of the great master:—on Pico della Mirandola, once a Quixotic young genius with long curls, astonished at his own powers and astonishing Rome with heterodox theses; afterward a more humble student with a consuming passion for inward perfection, having come to find the universe more astonishing than his own cleverness:—on innocent, laborious Marsilio Ficino, picked out young to be reared as a Platonic philosopher, and fed on Platonism, in all its stages, till his mind was perhaps a little pulpy from that too exclusive diet:—on Angelo Poliziano, chief literary genius of that age, a born poet, and a scholar without dullness, whose phrases had blood in

them and are alive still:—or, further back, on Leon Battista Alberti, a reverend senior when those three were young, and of a much grander type than they, a robust, universal mind, at once practical and theoretic, artist, man of science, inventor, poet:—and on many more valiant workers, whose names are not registered where every day we turn the leaf to read them, but whose labors make a part, though an unrecognized part, of our inheritance, like the plowing and sowing of past generations.

Bernardo Rucellai was a man to hold a distinguished place in that Academy even before he became its host and patron. He was still in the prime of life, not more than four and forty, with a somewhat haughty, cautiously dignified presence; conscious of an amazingly pure Latinity, but, says Erasmus, not to be caught speaking Latin—no word of Latin to be sheared off him by the sharpest of Tentons. He welcomed Tito with more marked favor than usual and gave him a place between Lorenzo Tornabuoni and Giannozzi Pucci, both of them accomplished young members of the Medicean party.

Of course the talk was the lightest in the world while the brass bowl filled with scented water was passing round, that the company might wash their hands, and rings flashed on white fingers under the wax-lights, and there was the pleasant fragrance of fresh white damask newly come from France. The tone of remark was a very common one in those times. Some one asked what Dante's pattern old Florentine would think if the life could come into him again under his leathern belt and bone clasp, and he could see silver forks on the table? And it was agreed on all hands that the habits of posterity would be very surprising to ancestors, if ancestors could only know them.

And while the silver forks were just dallying with the appetizing delicacies that introduced the more serious business of the supper—such as morsels of liver, cooked to that exquisite point that they would melt in the mouth—there was time to admire the designs on the enameled silver centres of the brass service, and to say something, as usual, about the silver dish or confetti, a masterpiece of Antonio Pollajuolo, whom patronizing Popes had seduced from his native Florence to more gorgeous Rome.

“Ah, I remember,” said Niccolò Ridolfi, a middle-aged man, with that negligent ease of manner which, seeming to claim nothing, is really based on the life-long consciousness of commanding rank—“I remember our Antonio

getting bitter about his chiseling and enameling of these metal things, and taking in a fury to painting, because, said he, 'the artist who puts his work into gold and silver puts his brains into the melting-pot.'"

"And that is not unlikely to be a true foreboding of Antonio's," said Giannozzo Pucci. "If this pretty war with Pisa goes on, and the revolt only spreads a little to our other towns, it is not only our silver dishes that are likely to go; I doubt whether Antonio's silver saints round the altar of San Giovanni will not some day vanish from the eyes of the faithful to be worshipped more devoutly in the form of coin."

"The Frate is preparing us for that already," said Tornabuoni. "He is telling the people that God will not have silver crucifixes and starving stomachs; and that the church is best adorned with the gems of holiness and the fine gold of brotherly love."

"A very useful doctrine of war-finance, as many a Condottiere has found," said Bernardo Rucellai, drily. "But politics come on after the confetti, Lorenzo, when we can drink wine enough to wash them down; they are too solid to be taken with roast and boiled."

"Yes, indeed," said Niccolò Ridolfi. "Our Luigi Pulci would have said this delicate boiled kid must be eaten with an impartial mind. I remember one day at Careggi, when Luigi was in his rattling vein, he was maintaining that nothing perverted the palate like opinion. 'Opinion,' said he, 'corrupts the saliva—that's why men took to pepper. Skepticism is the only philosophy that doesn't bring a taste in the mouth.' 'Nay,' says poor Lorenzo de Medici, 'you must be out there, Luigi. Here is this untainted skeptic, Matteo Franco, who wants hotter sauce than any of us.' 'Because he has a strong opinion of *himself*,' flashes out Luigi, 'which is the original egg of all other opinion. *He* a skeptic? He believes in the immortality of his own verses. He is such a logician as that preaching friar who described the pavement of the bottomless pit.' Poor Luigi! his mind was like sharpest steel that can touch nothing without cutting."

"And yet a very gentle-hearted creature," said Giannozzo Pucci. "It seemed to me his talk was a mere blowing of soap-bubbles. What dithyrambs he went into about eating and drinking! and yet he was as temperate as a butterfly."

The light talk and the solid eatables were not soon at an

end, for after the roast and boiled meats came the indispensable capon and game, and, crowning glory of a well-spread table, a peacock cooked according to the receipt of Apicius for cooking partridges, namely, with the feathers on, but not plucked afterward, as that great authority ordered concerning his partridges; on the contrary, so disposed on the dish that it might look as much as possible like a live peacock taking its unboiled repose. Great was the skill required in that confidential servant who was the official carver, respectfully to turn the classical though insipid bird on its back, and expose the plucked breast from which he was to dispense a delicate slice to each of the honorable company, unless any one should be of so independent a mind as to decline that expensive toughness and prefer the vulgar digestibility of capon.

Hardly any one was so bold. Tito quoted Horace and dispersed his slice in small particles over his plate; Bernardo Rucellai made a learned observation about the ancient price of peacocks' eggs, but did not pretend to eat his slice; and Niccolò Ridolfi held a mouthful on his fork while he told a favorite story of Luigi Pulci's, about a man of Siena, who, wanting to give a splendid entertainment at moderate expense, bought a wild goose, cut off its beak and webbed feet, and boiled it in its feathers, to pass for a pea-hen.

In fact, very little peacock was eaten; but there was the satisfaction of sitting at a table where peacock was served up in a remarkable manner, and of knowing that such caprices were not within reach of any but those who supped with the very wealthiest men. And it would have been rashness to speak slightly of peacock's flesh, or any other venerable institution, at a time when Fra Girolamo was teaching the disturbing doctrine that it was not the duty of the rich to be luxurious for the sake of the poor.

Meanwhile, in the chill obscurity that surrounded this centre of warmth, and light, and savory odors, the lonely disowned man was walking in gradually narrowing circuits. He paused among the trees, and looked in at the windows, which made brilliant pictures against the gloom. He could hear the laughter; he could see Tito gesticulating with careless grace, and hear his voice, now alone, now mingling in the merry confusion of interlacing speeches. Baldassarre's mind was highly strung. He was preparing himself for the moment when he could win his entrance into this brilliant company; and he had a savage satisfac-

tion in the sight of Tito's easy gayety, which seemed to be preparing the unconscious victim for more effective torture.

But the men seated among the branching tapers and the flashing cups could know nothing of the pale fierce face that watched them from without. The light can be a curtain as well as the darkness.

And the talk went on with more eagerness as it became less disconnected and trivial. The sense of citizenship was just then strongly forced even on the most indifferent minds. What the overmastering Fra Girolamo was saying and prompting was really uppermost in the thoughts of every one at table; and before the stewed fish was removed, and while the favorite sweets were yet to come, his name rose to the surface of the conversation, and, in spite of Rucellai's previous prohibition, the talk again became political. At first, while the servants remained present, it was mere gossip: what had been done in the Palazzo on the first day's voting for the Great Council; how hot-tempered and domineering Francesco Valori was, as if he were to have everything his own way by right of his austere virtue; and how it was clear to everybody who heard Soderini's speeches in favor of the Great Council and also heard the Frate's sermons, that they were both kneaded in the same trough.

"My opinion is," said Niccolò Ridolfi, "that the Frate has a longer head for public matters than Soderini or any Piagnone among them: you may depend on it that Soderini is his mouthpiece more than he is Soderini's."

"No, Niccolò; there I differ from you," said Bernardo Rucellai: "the Frate has an acute mind, and readily sees what will serve his own ends; but it is not likely that Pagolantonio Soderini, who has had long experience of affairs, and has specially studied the Venetian Council, should be much indebted to a monk for ideas on that subject. No, no; Soderini loads the cannon; though, I grant you, Fra Girolamo brings the powder and lights the match. He is master of the people, and the people are getting master of us. Ecco!"

"Well," said Lorenzo Tornabuoni, presently, when the room was clear of servants, and nothing but wine was passing round, "whether Soderini is indebted or not, *we* are indebted to the Frate for the general amnesty which has gone along with the scheme of the Council. We might have done without the fear of God and the reform of morals being passed by a majority of black beans; but

that excellent proposition, that our Medicean heads should be allowed to remain comfortably on our shoulders, and that we should not be obliged to hand over our property in fines, has my warm approval, and it is my belief that nothing but the Frate's predominance could have procured that for us. And you may rely on it that Fra Girolamo is as firm as a rock on that point of promoting peace. I have had an interview with him."

There was a murmur of surprise and curiosity at the farther end of the table; but Bernardo Rucellai simply nodded, as if he knew what Tornabuoni had to say, and wished him to go on.

"Yes," proceeded Tornabuoni, "I have been favored with an interview in the Frate's own cell, which, let me tell you, is not a common favor; for I have reason to believe that even Francesco Valori very seldom sees him in private. However, I think he saw me the more willingly because I was not a ready-made follower, but had to be converted. And, for my part, I see clearly enough that the only safe and wise policy for us Mediceans to pursue is to throw our strength into the scale of the Frate's party. We are not strong enough to make head on our own behalf; and if the Frate and the popular party were upset, every one who hears me knows perfectly well what other party would be uppermost just now: Nerli, Alberti, Pazzi, and the rest—*Arrabbiati*, as somebody christened them the other day—who, instead of giving us an amnesty, would be inclined to fly at our throats like mad dogs, and not be satisfied till they had banished half of us."

There were strong interjections of assent to this last sentence of Tornabuoni's, as he paused and looked round a moment.

"A wise dissimulation," he went on, "is the only course for moderate rational men in times of violent party feeling. I need hardly tell this company what are my real political attachments: I am not the only man here who has strong personal ties to the banished family; but, apart from any such ties, I agree with my more experienced friends, who are allowing me to speak for them in their presence, that the only lasting and peaceful state of things for Florence is the predominance of some single family interest. This theory of the Frate's, that we are to have a popular government, in which every man is to strive only for the general good, and know no party

names, is a theory that may do for some isle of Cristoforo Colombo's finding, but will never do for our fine old quarrelsome Florence. A change must come before long, and with patience and caution we have every chance of determining the change in our favor. Meanwhile, the best thing we can do will be to keep the Frate's flag flying, for if any other were to be hoisted just now it would be a black flag for us."

"It's true," said Niccolò Ridolfi, in a curt decisive way. "What you say is true, Lorenzo. For my own part, I am too old for anybody to believe that I've changed my feathers. And there are certain of us—our old Bernardo del Nero for one—whom you would never persuade to borrow another man's shield. But we can lie still, like sleepy old dogs; and it's clear enough that barking would be of no use just now. As for this psalm-singing party, who vote for nothing but the glory of God, and want to make believe we can all love each other, and talk as if vice can be swept out with a besom by the Magnificent Eight, their day will not be a long one. After all the talk of scholars, there are but two sorts of government: one where men show their teeth at each other, and one where men show their tongues and lick the feet of the strongest. They'll get their Great Council finally voted to-morrow—that's certain enough—and they'll think they've found out a new plan of government; but as sure as there's a human skin under every lucco in the Council, their new plan will end like every other, in snarling or in licking. That's my view of things as a plain man. Not that I consider it becoming in men of family and following, who have got others depending on their constancy and on their sticking to their colors, to go a hunting with a fine net to catch reasons in the air, like doctors of law. I say frankly that, as the head of my family, I shall be true to my old alliances; and I have never yet seen any chalk-mark on political reasons to tell me which is true and which is false. My friend Bernardo Rucellai here is a man of reasons, I know, and I have no objection to anybody's finding fine-spun reasons for me, so that they don't interfere with my actions as a man of family who has faith to keep with his connections."

"If that is an appeal to me, Niccolò," said Bernardo Rucellai, with a formal dignity, in amusing contrast with Ridolfi's curt and pithy ease, "I may take this opportunity of saying, that while my wishes are partly determined by

long-standing personal relations, I cannot enter into any positive schemes with persons over whose actions I have no control. I myself might be content with a restoration of the old order of things; but with modifications—with important modifications. And the one point on which I wish to declare my concurrence with Lorenzo Tornabuoni is, that the best policy to be pursued by our friends is, to throw the weight of their interest into the scale of the popular party. For myself, I condescend to no dissimulation; nor do I at present see the party or the scheme that commands my full assent. In all alike there is crudity and confusion of ideas, and of all the twenty men who are my colleagues in the present crisis, there is not one with whom I do not find myself in wide disagreement.”

Niccolò Ridolfi shrugged his shoulders, and left it to some one else to take up the ball. As the wine went round the talk became more and more frank and lively, and the desire of several at once to be the chief speaker, as usual caused the company to break up into small knots of two and three.

It was a result which had been foreseen by Lorenzo Tornabuoni and Giannozzo Pucci, and they were among the first to turn aside from the highroad of general talk and enter into a special conversation with Tito, who sat between them; gradually pushing away their seats, and turning their backs on the table and wine.

“In truth, Melema,” Tornabuoni was saying at this stage, laying one hose-clad leg across the knee of the other, and caressing his ankle, “I know of no man in Florence who can serve our party better than you. You see what most of our friends are: men who can no more hide their prejudices than a dog can hide the natural tone of his bark, or else men whose political ties are so notorious, that they must always be objects of suspicion. Giannozzo here, and I, I flatter myself, are able to overcome that suspicion; we have that power of concealment and finesse, without which a rational cultivated man, instead of having any prerogative, is really at a disadvantage compared with a wild bull or a savage. But, except yourself, I know of no one else on whom we could rely for the necessary discretion.”

“Yes,” said Giannozzo Pucci, laying his hand on Tito’s shoulder, “the fact is, Tito mio, you can help us better than if you were Ulysses himself, for I am convinced that Ulysses often made himself disagreeable. To manage men one ought to have a sharp mind in a velvet sheath. And

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 "A soul in Florence who could undertake a journey to Rome, for example, with the money you can. There is your scholarship, which may be a pretext for such journeys; and after, there is your talent, which it would be difficult to match than your scholarship. Niccolò Macchiavelli might have done for us if he had been on our side, but hardly so well. He is too much bitten with notions, and has not your power of fascination. All the worse for him. He has lost a great chance in life, and you have got it."

"Yes," said Tornabuoni, lowering his voice in a significant manner, "you have only to play your game well, Melema, and the future belongs to you. For the Medici, you may rely upon it, will keep a foot in Rome as well as in Florence, and the time may not be far off when they will be able to make a finer career for their adherents even than they did in old days. Why shouldn't you take orders some day? There's a cardinal's hat at the end of that road, and you would not be the first Greek who has worn that ornament."

Tito laughed gaily. He was too acute not to measure Tornabuoni's exaggerated flattery, but still the flattery had a pleasant flavor.

"My joints are not so stiff yet," he said, "that I can't be induced to run without such a high prize as that. I think the income of an abbey or two held 'in commendam,' without the trouble of getting my head shaved, would satisfy me at present."

"I was not joking," said Tornabuoni, with grave suavity; "I think a scholar would always be the better off for taking orders. But we'll talk of that another time. One of the objects to be first borne in mind, is that you should win the confidence of the men who hang about San Marco; that is what Giannozzo and I shall do, but you may carry it farther than we can, because you are less observed. In that way you can get a thorough knowledge of their doings, and you will make a broader screen for your agency on our side. Nothing of course can be done before you start for Rome, because this bit of business between Piero de' Medici and the French nobles must be effected at once. I mean when you come back, of course; I need say no more. I believe you could make yourself the pet votary of San Marco, if you liked; but you are wise enough to know that effective dissimulation is never immoderate."

"If it were not that an adhesion to the popular side is necessary to your safety as an agent of our party, Titomio," said Giannozzo Pucci, who was more fraternal and less patronizing in his manner than Tornabuoni, "I could have wished your skill to have been employed in another way, for which it is still better fitted. But now we must look out for some other man among us who will manage to get into the confidence of our sworn enemies, the Arrabbiati; we need to know their movements more than those of the Frate's party, who are strong enough to play above-board. Still, it would have been a difficult thing for you, from your known relations with the Medici a little while back, and that sort of kinship your wife has with Bernardo del Nero. We must find a man who has no distinguished connections, and who has not yet taken any side."

Tito was pushing his hair backward automatically, as his manner was, and looking straight at Pucci with a scarcely perceptible smile on his lip.

"No need to look out for any one else," he said, promptly. "I can manage the whole business with perfect ease. I will engage to make myself the special confident of that thick-headed Dolfo Spini, and know his projects before he knows them himself."

Tito seldom spoke so confidently of his own powers, but he was in a state of exultation at the sudden opening of a new path before him, where fortune seemed to have hung higher prizes than any he had thought of hitherto. Hitherto he had seen success only in the form of favor; it now flashed on him in the shape of power—of such power as is possible to talent without traditional ties, and without beliefs. Each party that thought of him as a tool might become dependent on him. His position as an alien, his indifference to the ideas or prejudices of the men amongst whom he moved, were suddenly transformed into advantages; he became newly conscious of his own adroitness in the presence of a game that he was called on to play. And all the motives which might have made Tito shrink from the triple deceit that came before him as a tempting game, had been slowly strangled in him by the successive falsities of his life.

Our lives make a moral tradition for our individual selves, as the life of mankind at large makes a moral tradition for the race; and to have once acted nobly seems a reason why we should always be noble. But Tito was

feeling the effect of an opposite tradition: he had won no memories of self-conquest and perfect faithfulness from which he could have a sense of falling.

The triple colloquy went on with growing spirit till it was interrupted by a call from the table. Probably the movement came from the listeners in the party, who were afraid lest the talkers should tire themselves. At all events it was agreed that there had been enough of gravity, and Rucellai had just ordered new flasks of Montepulciano.

"How many minstrels are there among us?" he said, when there had been a general rallying round the table. "Melema, I think you are the chief: Matteo will give you the lute."

"Ah, yes!" said Giannozzo Pucci, "lead the last chorus from Poliziano's 'Orfeo,' that you have found such an excellent measure for, and we will all fall in:—

'Ciascun segua, o Bacco, te:
Bacco, Bacco, evoè, evoè!'"

The servant put the lute into Tito's hands, and then said something in an undertone to his master. A little subdued questioning and answering went on between them, while Tito touched the lute in a preluding way to the strain of the chorus, and there was a confusion of speech and musical humming all round the table. Bernardo Rucellai had said, "Wait a moment, Melema," but the words had been unheard by Tito, who was leaning toward Pucci, and singing low to him the phrases of the Mænad-chorus. He noticed nothing until the buzz round the table suddenly ceased, and the notes of his own voice, with its soft low-toned triumph, "Evoè, evoè!" fell in startling isolation.

It was a strange moment. Baldassarre had moved round the table till he was opposite Tito, and as the hum ceased there might be seen for an instant Baldassarre's fierce dark eyes bent on Tito's bright smiling unconsciousness, while the low notes of triumph dropped from his lips into the silence.

Tito looked up with a slight start, and his lips turned pale, but he seemed hardly more moved than Giannozzo Pucci, who had looked up at the same moment—or even than several others round the table; for that sallow deep-lined face with the hatred in its eyes seemed a terrible apparition across the wax-lit ease and gayety. And Tito quickly recovered some self-command. "A mad old man—

he looks like it—he *is* mad!” was the instantaneous thought that brought some courage with it; for he could conjecture no inward change in Baldassarre since they had met before. He just let his eyes fall and laid the lute on the table with apparent ease; but his fingers pinched the neck of the lute hard while he governed his head and his glance sufficiently to look with an air of quiet appeal toward Bernardo Rucellai, who said at once—

“Good man, what is your business? What is the important declaration that you have to make?”

“Messer Bernardo Rucellai, I wish you and your honorable friends to know in what sort of company you are sitting. There is a traitor among you.”

There was a general movement of alarm. Every one present, except Tito, thought of political danger and not of private injury.

Baldassarre began to speak as if he were thoroughly assured of what he had to say; but, in spite of his long preparation for this moment, there was the tremor of overmastering excitement in his voice. His passion shook him. He went on, but he did not say what he had meant to say. As he fixed his eyes on Tito again the passionate words were like blows—they defied premeditation.

“There is a man among you who is a scoundrel, a liar, a robber. I was a father to him. I took him from beggary when he was a child. I reared him, I cherished him, I taught him, I made him a scholar. My head has lain hard that his might have a pillow. And he left me in slavery; he sold the gems that were mine, and when I came again he denied me.”

The last words had been uttered with almost convulsed agitation, and Baldassarre paused, trembling. All glances were turned on Tito, who was now looking straight at Baldassarre. It was a moment of desperation that annihilated all feeling in him, except the determination to risk anything for the chance of escape. And he gathered confidence from the agitation by which Baldassarre was evidently shaken. He had ceased to pinch the neck of the lute, and had thrust his thumbs into his belt, while his lips had begun to assume a slight curl. He had never yet done an act of murderous cruelty even to the smallest animal that could utter a cry, but at that moment he would have been capable of treading the breath from a smiling child for the sake of his own safety.

“What does this mean, Melema?” said Bernardo

Rucellai, in a tone of cautious surprise. He, as well as the rest of the company, felt relieved that the tenor of the accusation was not political.

"Messer Bernardo," said Tito, "I believe this man is mad. I did not recognize him the first time he encountered me in Florence, but I know now that he is the servant who years ago accompanied me and my adoptive father to Greece, and was dismissed on account of misdemeanors. His name is Jacopo di Nola. Even at that time I believe his mind was unhinged, for, without any reason, he had conceived a strange hatred toward me; and now I am convinced that he is laboring under a mania which causes him to mistake his identity. He has already attempted my life since he has been in Florence; and I am in constant danger from him. But he is an object of pity rather than of indignation. It is too certain that my father is dead. You have only my word for it; but I must leave it to your judgment how far it is probable that a man of intellect and learning would have been lurking about in dark corners for the last month with the purpose of assassinating me; or how far it is probable that, if this man were my second father, I could have any motive for denying him. That story about my being rescued from beggary is the vision of a diseased brain. But it will be a satisfaction to me at least if you will demand from him proofs of his identity, lest any malignant person should choose to make this mad impeachment a reproach to me."

Tito had felt more and more confidence as he went on; the lie was not so difficult when it was once begun; and as the words fell easily from his lips, they gave him a sense of power such as men feel when they have begun a muscular feat successfully. In this way he acquired boldness enough to end with a challenge for proofs.

Baldassarre, while he had been walking in the gardens and afterward waiting in an outer room of the pavilion with the servants, had been making anew the digest of the evidence he would bring to prove his identity and Tito's baseness, recalling the description and history of his gems, and assuring himself by rapid mental glances that he could attest his learning and his travels. It might be partly owing to this nervous strain that the new shock of rage he felt as Tito's lie fell on his ears brought a strange bodily effect with it: a cold stream seemed to rush over him, and the last words of the speech seemed to be drowned by ringing chimes. Thought gave way to a dizzy horror, as if

the earth were slipping away from under him. Every one in the room was looking at him as Tito ended, and saw that the eyes which had had such fierce intensity only a few minutes before had now a vague fear in them. He clutched the back of a seat, and was silent.

Hardly any evidence could have been more in favor of Tito's assertion.

"Surely I have seen this man before, somewhere," said Tornabuoni.

"Certainly you have," said Tito, readily, in a low tone. "He is the escaped prisoner who clutched me on the steps of the Duomo. I did not recognize him then; he looks now more as he used to do, except that he has a more unmistakable air of mad imbecility."

"I cast no doubt on your word, Melema," said Bernardo Rucellai, with cautious gravity, "but you are right to desire some positive test of the fact." Then turning to Baldassarre, he said, "If you are the person you claim to be, you can doubtless give some description of the gems which were your property. I myself was the purchaser of more than one gem from Messer Tito—the chief rings, I believe in his collection. One of them is a fine sard, engraved with a subject from Homer. If, as you allege, you are a scholar, and the rightful owner of that ring, you can doubtless turn to the noted passage in Homer from which that subject is taken. Do you accept this test, Melema? or have you anything to allege against its validity? The Jacopo you speak of, was he a scholar?"

It was a fearful crisis for Tito. If he said "Yes," his quick mind told him that he would shake the credibility of his story: if he said "No," he risked everything on the uncertain extent of Baldassarre's imbecility. But there was no noticeable pause before he said, "No, I accept the test."

There was a dead silence while Rucellai moved toward the recess where the books were, and came back with the fine Florentine Homer in his hand. Baldassarre, when he was addressed, had turned his head toward the speaker, and Rucellai believed that he had understood him. But he chose to repeat what he had said, that there might be no mistake as to the test.

"The ring I possess," he said, "is a fine sard, engraved with a subject from Homer. There was no other at all resembling it in Messer Tito's collection. Will you turn to the passage in Homer from which that subject is taken?"

Seat yourself here," he added, laying the book on the table, and pointing to his own seat while he stood beside it.

Baldassarre had so far recovered from the first confused horror produced by the sensation of rushing coldness and chiming din in the ears as to be partly aware of what was said to him: he was aware that something was being demanded from him to prove his identity, but he formed no distinct idea of the details. The sight of the book recalled the habitual longing and faint hope that he could read and understand, and he moved toward the chair immediately.

The book was open before him, and he bent his head a little toward it, while everybody watched him eagerly. He turned no leaf. His eyes wandered over the pages that lay before him, and then fixed on them a straining gaze. This lasted for two or three minutes in dead silence. Then he lifted his hands to each side of his head, and said, in a low tone of despair, "Lost, lost!"

There was something so piteous in the wandering look and the low cry that while they confirmed the belief in his madness they raised compassion. Nay, so distinct sometimes is the working of a double consciousness within us, that Tito himself, while he triumphed in the apparent verification of his lie, wished that he had never made the lie necessary to himself—wished he had recognized his father on the steps—wished he had gone to seek him—wished everything had been different. But he had borrowed from the terrible usurer Falsehood, and the loan had mounted and mounted with the years, till he belonged to the usurer, body and soul.

The compassion excited in all the witnesses was not without its danger to Tito; for conjecture is constantly guided by feeling, and more than one person suddenly conceived that this man might have been a scholar and have lost his faculties. On the other hand, they had not present to their minds the motives which could have led Tito to the denial of his benefactor, and having no ill-will toward him, it would have been difficult to them to believe that he had been uttering the basest of lies. And the originally common type of Baldassarre's person, coarsened by years of hardship, told as a confirmation of Tito's lie. If Baldassarre, to begin with, could have uttered precisely the words he had premeditated, there might have been something in the form of his accusation which would have given it the stamp not only of true experience but of mental refinement. But there had been no such testimony

in his impulsive agitated words: and there seemed the very opposite testimony in the rugged face and the coarse hands that trembled beside it, standing out in strong contrast in the midst of that velvet-clad, fair-handed company.

His next movement, while he was being watched in silence, told against him too. He took his hands from his head, and felt for something under his tunic. Every one guessed what that movement meant—guessed that there was a weapon at his side. Glances were interchanged: and Bernardo Rucellai said, in a quiet tone, touching Baldassarre's shoulder—

“My friend, this is an important business of yours. You shall have all justice. Follow me into a private room.”

Baldassarre was still in that half-stunned state in which he was susceptible to any prompting, in the same way as an insect that forms no conception of what the prompting leads to. He rose from his seat, and followed Rucellai out of the room.

In two or three minutes Rucellai came back again, and said—

“He is safe under lock and key. Piero Pitti, you are one of the Magnificent Eight, what do you think of our sending Matteo to the palace for a couple of sbirri, who may escort him to the Stinche? * If there is any danger in him, as I think there is, he will be safe there; and we can inquire about him to-morrow.”

Pitti assented, and the order was given.

“He is certainly an ill-looking fellow,” said Tornabuoni. “And you say he has attempted your life already, Melema?”

And the talk turned on the various forms of madness, and the fierceness of the southern blood. If the seeds of conjecture unfavorable to Tito had been planted in the mind of any one present, they were hardly strong enough to grow without the aid of much daylight and ill-will. The common-looking, wild-eyed old man, clad in serge, might have won belief without very strong evidence, if he had accused a man who was envied and disliked. As it was, the only congruous and probable view of the case seemed to be the one that sent the unpleasant accuser safely out of sight, and left the pleasant serviceable Tito just where he was before.

The subject gradually floated away, and gave place to others, till a heavy tramp, and something like the struggling of a man who was being dragged away, were heard

*The largest prison in Florence.

outside. The sounds soon died out, and the interruption seemed to make the last hour's conviviality more resolute and vigorous. Every one was willing to forget a disagreeable incident.

Tito's heart was palpitating, and the wine tasted no better to him than if it had been blood.

To-night he had paid a heavier price than ever to make himself safe. He did not like the price, and yet it was inevitable that he should be glad of the purchase.

And after all he led the chorus. He was in a state of excitement in which oppressive sensations, and the wretched consciousness of something hateful but irrevocable, were mingled with a feeling of triumph which seemed to assert itself as the feeling that would subsist and be master of the morrow.

And it *was* master. For on the morrow, as we saw, when he was about to start on his mission to Rome, he had the air of a man well satisfied with the world.

CHAPTER XL.

AN ARRESTING VOICE.

WHEN Romola sat down on the stone under the cypress, all things conspired to give her the sense of freedom and solitude: her escape from the accustomed walls and streets; the widening distance from her husband, who was by this time riding toward Siena, while every hour would take her farther on the opposite way; the morning stillness; the great dip of ground on the roadside making a gulf between her and the sombre calm of the mountains. For the first time in her life she felt alone in the presence of the earth and sky, with no human presence interposing and making a law for her.

Suddenly a voice close to her said —

“You are Romola de Bardi, the wife of Tito Melema.”

She knew the voice: it had vibrated through her more than once before; and because she knew it, she did not turn round or look up. She sat shaken by awe, and yet inwardly rebelling against the awe. It was one of those black-skirted monks who was daring to speak to her, and interfere with her privacy: that was all. And yet she

was shaken, as if that destiny which men thought of as a sceptered deity had come to her, and grasped her with fingers of flesh.

"You are fleeing from Florence in disguise. I have a command from God to stop you. You are not permitted to flee."

Romola's anger at the intrusion mounted higher at these imperative words. She would not turn round to look at the speaker, whose examining gaze she resented. Sitting quite motionless, she said—

"What right have you to speak to me, or to hinder me?"

"The right of a messenger. You have put on a religious garb, and you have no religious purpose. You have sought the garb as a disguise. But you were not suffered to pass me without being discerned. It was declared to me who you were: it is declared to me that you are seeking to escape from the lot God has laid upon you. You wish your true name and your true place in life to be hidden, that you may choose for yourself a new name and a new place, and have no rule but your own will. And I have a command to call you back. My daughter, you must return to your place."

Romola's mind rose in stronger rebellion with every sentence. She was the more determined not to show any sign of submission, because the consciousness of being inwardly shaken made her dread lest she should fall into irresolution. She spoke with more irritation than before.

"I will not return. I acknowledge no right of priests and monks to interfere with my actions. You have no power over me."

"I know—I know you have been brought up in scorn of obedience. But it is not the poor monk who claims to interfere with you: it is the truth that commands you. And you cannot escape it. Either you must obey it, and it will lead you; or you must disobey it, and it will hang on you with the weight of a chain which you will drag forever. But you will obey it, my daughter. Your old servant will return to you with the mules; my companion is gone to fetch him; and you will go back to Florence."

She started up with anger in her eyes, and faced the speaker. It was Fra Girolamo: she knew that well enough before. She was nearly as tall as he was, and their faces were almost on a level. She had started up with defiant words ready to burst from her lips, but they fell back

again without utterance. She had met Fra Girolamo's calm glance, and the impression from it was so new to her, that her anger sank ashamed as something irrelevant.

There was nothing transcendent in Savonarola's face. It was not beautiful. It was strong-featured, and owed all its refinement to habits of mind and rigid discipline of the body. The source of the impression his glance produced on Romola was the sense it conveyed to her of interest in her and care for her apart from any personal feeling. It was the first time she had encountered a gaze in which simple human fellowship expressed itself as a strongly-felt bond. Such a glance is half the vocation of the priest or spiritual guide of men, and Romola felt it impossible again to question his authority to speak to her. She stood silent, looking at him. And he spoke again.

"You assert your freedom proudly, my daughter. But who is so base as the debtor who thinks himself free?"

There was a sting in those words, and Romola's countenance changed as if a subtle pale flash had gone over it.

"And you are flying from your debts: the debt of a Florentine woman; the debt of a wife. You are turning your back on the lot that has been appointed for you—you are going to choose another. But can man or woman choose duties? No more than they can choose their birthplace or their father and mother. My daughter, you are fleeing from the presence of God into the wilderness."

As the anger melted from Romola's mind, it had given place to a new presentiment of the strength there might be in submission, if this man, at whom she was beginning to look with a vague reverence, had some valid law to show her. But no—it was impossible; he could not know what determined her. Yet she could not again simply refuse to be guided; she was constrained to plead; and in her new need to be reverent while she resisted, the title which she had never given him before came to her lips without forethought.

"My father, you cannot know the reasons which compel me to go. None can know them but myself. None can judge for me. I have been driven by great sorrow. I am resolved to go."

"I know enough, my daughter: my mind has been so far illuminated concerning you, that I know enough. You are not happy in your married life; but I am not a confessor, and I seek to know nothing that should be reserved for the seal of confession. I have a divine warrant to stop

you, which does not depend on such knowledge. You were warned by a message from heaven, delivered in my presence—you were warned before marriage, when you might still have lawfully chosen to be free from the marriage-bond. But you chose the bond; and in willfully breaking it—I speak to you as a pagan, if the holy mystery of matrimony is not sacred to you—you are breaking a pledge. Of what wrongs will you complain, my daughter, when you yourself are committing one of the greatest wrongs a woman and a citizen can be guilty of—withdrawing in secrecy and disguise from a pledge which you have given in the face of God and your fellow-men? Of what wrongs will you complain when you yourself are breaking the simplest law that lies at the foundation of the trust which binds man to man—faithfulness to the spoken word? This, then, is the wisdom you have gained by scorning the mysteries of the Church?—not to see the bare duty of integrity, where the Church would have taught you to see, not integrity only, but religion.”

The blood had rushed to Romola's face, and she shrank as if she had been stricken. “I would not have put on a disguise,” she began; but she could not go on,—she was too much shaken by the suggestion in the Frate's words of a possible affinity between her own conduct and Tito's.

“And to break that pledge you fly from Florence: Florence, where there are the only men and women in the world to whom you owe the debt of a fellow-citizen.”

“I should never have quitted Florence,” said Romola, tremulously, “as long as there was any hope of my fulfilling a duty to my father there.”

“And do you own no tie but that of a child to her father in the flesh? Your life has been spent in blindness, my daughter. You have lived with those who sit on a hill aloof and look down on the life of their fellow-men. I know their vain discourse. It is of what has been in the times which they fill with their own fancied wisdom, while they scorn God's work in the present. And doubtless you were taught how there were pagan women who felt what it was to live for the Republic; yet you have never felt that you, a Florentine woman, should live for Florence. If your own people are wearing a yoke, will you slip from under it, instead of struggling with them to lighten it? There is hunger and misery in our streets, yet you say, ‘I care not; I have my own sorrows; I will go away, if peradventure I can ease them.’ The servants of God are strug-

gling after a law of justice, peace, and charity, that the hundred thousand citizens among whom you were born may be governed righteously; but you think no more of this than if you were a bird, that may spread its wings and fly whither it will in search of food to its liking. And yet you have scorned the teaching of the Church, my daughter. As if you, a willful wanderer, following your own blind choice, were not below the humblest Florentine woman who stretches forth her hands with her own people, and craves a blessing for them; and feels a close sisterhood with the neighbor who kneels beside her and is not of her own blood; and thinks of the mighty purpose that God has for Florence; and waits and endures because the promised work is great, and she feels herself little."

"I was not going away to ease and self-indulgence," said Romola, raising her head again, with a prompting to vindicate herself. "I was going away to hardship. I expect no joy: it is gone from my life."

"You are seeking your own will, my daughter. You are seeking some good other than the law you are bound to obey. But how will you find good? It is not a thing of choice: it is a river that flows from the foot of the Invisible Throne, and flows by the path of obedience. I say again, man cannot choose his duties. You may choose to forsake your duties, and choose not to have the sorrow they bring. But you will go forth; and what will you find, my daughter? Sorrow without duty—bitter herbs, and no bread with them."

"But if you knew," said Romola, clasping her hands and pressing them tight, as she looked pleadingly at Fra Girolamo; "if you knew what it was to me—how impossible it seemed to me to bear it."

"My daughter," he said, pointing to the cord round Romola's neck, "you carry something within your mantle; draw it forth and look at it."

Romola gave a slight start, but her impulse now was to do just what Savonarola told her. Her self-doubt was grappled by a stronger will and a stronger conviction than her own. She drew forth the crucifix. Still pointing toward it, he said—

"There, my daughter, is the image of a Supreme Offering, made by Supreme Love, because the need of man was great."

He paused, and she held the crucifix trembling—trem-

bling under a sudden impression of the wide distance between her present and her past self. What a length of road she had traveled through since she first took that crucifix from the Frate's hands! Had life as many secrets before her still as it had for her then, in her young blindness? It was a thought that helped all other subduing influences; and at the sound of Fra Girolamo's voice again, Romola, with a quick involuntary movement, pressed the crucifix against her mantle and looked at him with more submission than before.

"Conform your life to that image, my daughter; make your sorrow an offering: and when the fire of Divine charity burns within you, and you behold the need of your fellow-men by the light of that flame, you will not call your offering great. You have carried yourself proudly, as one who held herself not of common blood or of common thoughts; but you have been as one unborn to the true life of man. What! you say your love for your father no longer tells you to stay in Florence? Then, since that tie is snapped, you are without a law, without religion: you are no better than a beast of the field when she is robbed of her young. If the yearning of a fleshly love is gone, you are without love, without obligation. See, then, my daughter, how you are below the life of the believer who worships the image of the Supreme Offering, and feels the glow of a common life with the lost multitude for whom that offering was made, and beholds the history of the world as a history of the great redemption in which he is himself a fellow-worker, in his own place and among his own people! If you held that faith, my beloved daughter, you would not be a wanderer flying from suffering, and blindly seeking the good of a freedom which is lawlessness. You would feel that Florence was the home of your soul as well as your birthplace, because you would see the work that was given you to do there. If you forsake your place, who will fill it? You ought to be in your place now, helping in the great work by which God will purify Florence, and raise it to be the guide of the nations. What! the earth is full of iniquity—full of groans—the light is still struggling with a mighty darkness, and you say, 'I cannot bear my bonds; I will burst them asunder; I will go where no man claims me'? My daughter, every bond of your life is a debt: the right lies in the payment of that debt; it can lie nowhere else. In vain will you wander over the earth; you will be wandering forever away from the right."

Romola was inwardly struggling with strong forces: that immense personal influence of Savonarola, which came from the energy of his emotions and beliefs; and her consciousness, surmounting all prejudice, that his words implied a higher law than any she had yet obeyed. But the resisting thoughts were not yet overborne.

"How, then, could Dino be right? He broke ties. He forsook his place."

"That was a special vocation. He was constrained to depart, else he could not have attained the higher life. It would have been stifled within him."

"And I too," said Romola, raising her hands to her brow, and speaking in a tone of anguish, as if she were being dragged to some torture. "Father, you may be wrong."

"Ask your conscience, my daughter. You have no vocation such as your brother had. You are a wife. You seek to break your ties in self-will and anger, not because the higher life calls upon you to renounce them. The higher life begins for us, my daughter, when we renounce our own will to bow before a Divine law. That seems hard to you. It is the portal of wisdom, and freedom, and blessedness. And the symbol of it hangs before you. That wisdom is the religion of the Cross. And you stand aloof from it: you are a pagan; you have been taught to say, 'I am as the wise men who lived before the time when the Jew of Nazareth was crucified.' And that is your wisdom! To be as the dead whose eyes are closed, and whose ear is deaf to the work of God that has been since their time. What has your dead wisdom done for you, my daughter? It has left you without a heart for the neighbors among whom you dwell, without care for the great work by which Florence is to be regenerated and the world made holy; it has left you without a share in the Divine life which quenches the sense of suffering Self in the ardors of an ever-growing love. And now, when the sword has pierced your soul, you say, 'I will go away; I cannot bear my sorrow.' And you think nothing of the sorrow and the wrong that are within the walls of the city where you dwell: you would leave your place empty, when it ought to be filled with your pity and your labor. If there is wickedness in the streets, your steps should shine with the light of purity; if there is a cry of anguish, you, my daughter, because you know the meaning of the cry, should be there to still it. My beloved daughter, sorrow

has come to teach you a new worship: the sign of it hangs before you."

Romola's mind was still torn by conflict. She foresaw that she should obey Savonarola and go back: his words had come to her as if they were an interpretation of that revulsion from self-satisfied ease, and of that new fellowship with suffering, which had already been awakened in her. His arresting voice had brought a new condition into her life, which made it seem impossible to her that she could go on her way as if she had not heard it; yet she shrank as one who sees the path she must take, but sees, too, that the hot lava lies there. And the instinctive shrinking from a return to her husband brought doubts. She turned away her eyes from Fra Girolamo; and stood for a minute or two with her hands hanging clasped before her, like a statue. At last she spoke, as if the words were being wrung from her, still looking on the ground.

"My husband—he is not—my love is gone!"

"My daughter, there is the bond of a higher love. Marriage is not carnal only, made for selfish delight. See what that thought leads you to! It leads you to wander away in a false garb from all the obligations of your place and name. That would not have been, if you had learned that it is a sacramental vow, from which none but God can release you. My daughter, your life is not as a grain of sand, to be blown by the winds; it is a thing of flesh and blood that dies if it be sundered. Your husband is not a malefactor?"

Romola started. "Heaven forbid! No; I accuse him of nothing."

"I did not suppose he was a malefactor. I meant, that if he were a malefactor, your place would be in the prison beside him. My daughter, if the cross comes to you as a wife, you must carry it as a wife. You may say, 'I will forsake my husband,' but you cannot cease to be a wife."

"Yet if—oh, how could I bear——" Romola had involuntarily begun to say something which she sought to banish from her mind again.

"Make your marriage-sorrows an offering too, my daughter: an offering to the great work by which sin and sorrow are being made to cease. The end is sure, and is already beginning. Here in Florence it is beginning, and the eyes of faith behold it. And it may be our blessedness to die for it: to die daily by the crucifixion of our

selfish will—to die at last by laying our bodies on the altar. My daughter, you a child of Florence; fulfill the duties of that great inheritance. Live for Florence—for your own people, whom God is preparing to bless the earth. Bear the anguish and the smart. The iron is sharp—I know, I know—it rends the tender flesh. The draught is bitterness on the lips. But there is rapture in the cup—there is the vision which makes all life below it dross forever. Come, my daughter, come back to your place!”

While Savonarola spoke with growing intensity, his arms tightly folded before him still, as they had been from the first, but his face alight as from an inward flame, Romola felt herself surrounded and possessed by the glow of his passionate faith. The chill doubts all melted away; she was subdued by the sense of something unspeakably great to which she was being called by a strong being who roused a new strength within herself. In a voice that was like a low, prayerful cry, she said—

“Father, I will be guided. Teach me! I will go back.”

Almost unconsciously she sank on her knees. Savonarola stretched out his hands over her; but feeling would no longer pass through the channel of speech, and he was silent.

CHAPTER XLI.

COMING BACK.

“RISE, my daughter,” said Fra Girolamo at last. “Your servant is waiting not far off with the mules. It is time that I should go onward to Florence.”

Romola arose from her knees. That silent attitude had been a sort of sacrament to her, confirming the state of yearning passivity on which she had newly entered. By the one act of renouncing her resolve to quit her husband, her will seemed so utterly bruised that she felt the need of direction even in small things. She lifted up the edge of her cowl, and saw Maso and the second Dominican standing with their backs toward her on the edge of the hill about ten yards from her; but she looked at Savonarola again without speaking, as if the order to Maso to turn back must come from him and not from her.

"I will go and call them," he said, answering her glance of appeal, "and I will recommend you, my daughter, to the Brother who is with me. You desire to put yourself under guidance, and to learn that wisdom which has been hitherto as foolishness to you. A chief gate of that wisdom is the sacrament of confession. You will need a confessor, my daughter, and I desire to put you under the care of Fra Salvestro, one of the brethren of San Marco, in whom I most confide."

"I would rather have no guidance but yours, father," said Romola, looking anxious.

"My daughter, I do not act as a confessor. The vocation I have withdraws me from offices that would force me into frequent contact with the laity, and interfere with my special duties."

"Then shall I not be able to speak to you in private? if I waver, if——" Romola broke off from rising agitation. She felt a sudden alarm lest her new strength in renunciation should vanish if the immediate personal influence of Savonarola vanished.

"My daughter, if your soul has need of the word in private from my lips, you will let me know it through Fra Salvestro, and I will see you in the sacristy or in the choir of San Marco. And I will not cease to watch over you. I will instruct my brother concerning you, that he may guide you into that path of labor for the suffering and the hungry to which you are called as a daughter of Florence in these times of hard need. I desire to behold you among the feebler and more ignorant sisters as the apple-tree among the trees of the forest, so that your fairness and all natural gifts may be but as a lamp through which the Divine light shines the more purely. I will go now and call your servant."

When Maso had been sent a little way in advance, Fra Salvestro came forward, and Savonarola led Romola toward him. She had beforehand felt an inward shrinking from a new guide who was a total stranger to her: but to have resisted Savonarola's advice would have been to assume an attitude of independence at a moment when all her strength must be drawn from the renunciation of independence. And the whole bent of her mind now was toward doing what was painful rather than what was easy. She bowed reverently to Fra Salvestro before looking directly at him; but when she raised her head and saw him fully, her reluctance became a palpitating doubt.

There are men whose presence infuses trust and reverence; there are others to whom we have need to carry our trust and reverence ready-made; and that difference flashed on Romola as she ceased to have Savonarola before her, and saw in his stead Fra Salvestro Maruffi. It was not that there was anything manifestly repulsive in Fra Salvestro's face and manner, any air of hypocrisy, any tinge of coarseness; his face was handsomer than Fra Girolamo's, his person a little taller. He was the long accepted confessor of many among the chief personages in Florence, and had therefore had large experience as a spiritual director. But his face had the vacillating expression of a mind unable to concentrate itself strongly in the channel of one great emotion or belief—an expression which is fatal to influence over an ardent nature like Romola's. Such an expression is not the stamp of insincerity; it is the stamp simply of a shallow soul, which will often be found sincerely striving to fill a high vocation, sincerely composing its countenance to the utterance of sublime formulas, but finding the muscles twitch or relax in spite of belief, as prose insists on coming instead of poetry to the man who has not the divine frenzy. Fra Salvestro had a peculiar liability to visions, dependent apparently on a constitution given to somnambulism: Savonarola believed in the supernatural character of these visions, while Fra Salvestro himself had originally resisted such an interpretation of them, and had even rebuked Savonarola for his prophetic preaching: another proof, if one were wanted, that the relative greatness of men is not to be gauged by their tendency to disbelieve the superstitions of their age. For of these two there can be no question which was the great man and which the small.

The difference between them was measured very accurately by the change in Romola's feeling as Fra Salvestro began to address her in words of exhortation and encouragement. After her first angry resistance of Savonarola had passed away, she had lost all remembrance of the old dread lest any influence should drag her within the circle of fanaticism and sour monkish piety. But now again, the chill breath of that dread stole over her. It could have no decisive effect against the impetus her mind had just received; it was only like the closing of the gray clouds over the sunrise, which made her returning path monotonous and sombre.

And perhaps of all sombre paths that on which we go

back after treading it with a strong resolution is the one that most severely tests the fervor of renunciation. As they re-entered the city gates the light snow-flakes fell about them; and as the gray sister walked hastily homeward from the Piazza di San Marco, and trod the bridge again, and turned in at the large door in the Via de Bardi, her footsteps were marked darkly on the thin carpet of snow, and her cowl fell laden and damp about her face.

She went up to her room, threw off her serge, destroyed the parting letters, replaced all her precious trifles, unbound her hair, and put on her usual black dress. Instead of taking a long exciting journey, she was to sit down in her usual place. The snow fell against the windows and she was alone.

She felt the dreariness, yet her courage was high, like that of a seeker who has come on new signs of gold. She was going to thread life by a fresh clue. She had thrown all the energy of her will into renunciation. The empty tabernacle remained locked, and she placed Dino's crucifix outside it.

Nothing broke the outward monotony of her solitary home, till the night came like a white ghost at the windows. Yet it was the most memorable Christmas-eve in her life to Romola, this of 1494.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER XLII.

ROMOLA IN HER PLACE.

IT was the thirtieth of October, 1496. The sky that morning was clear enough, and there was a pleasant autumnal breeze. But the Florentines just then thought very little about the land breezes: they were thinking of the gales at sea, which seemed to be uniting with all other powers to disprove the Frate's declaration that Heaven took special care of Florence.

For those terrible gales had driven away from the coast of Leghorn certain ships from Marseilles, freighted with soldiery and corn; and Florence was in the direst need, first for food, and secondly of fighting men. Pale Famine was in her streets, and her territory was threatened on all its borders.

For the French king, that new Charlemagne, who had entered Italy in anticipatory triumph, and had conquered Naples without the least trouble, had gone away again fifteen months ago, and was even, it was feared, in his grief for the loss of a new-born son, losing the languid intention of coming back again to redress grievances and set the church in order. A league had been formed against him—a Holy League, with Pope Borgia at its head—to “drive out the barbarians,” who still garrisoned the fortress of Naples. That had a patriotic sound; but, looked at more closely, the Holy League seemed very much like an agreement among certain wolves to drive away all other wolves, and then to see which among themselves could snatch the largest share of the prey. And there was a general disposition to regard Florence not as a fellow-wolf, but rather as a desirable carcass. Florence, therefore, of all the chief Italian States, had alone declined to join the League, adhering still to the French alliance.

She had declined at her peril. At this moment Pisa, still fighting savagely for liberty, was being encouraged not only by strong forces from Venice and Milan, but by the

presence of the German Emperor Maximilian, who had been invited by the League, and was joining the Pisans with such troops as he had in the attempt to get possession of Leghorn, while the coast was invested by Venetian and Genoese ships. And if Leghorn should fall into the hands of the enemy, woe to Florence! For if that one outlet toward the sea were closed, hedged in as she was on the land by the bitter ill-will of the Pope and the jealousy of smaller States, how could succors reach her?

The government of Florence had shown a great heart in this urgent need, meeting losses and defeats with vigorous effort, raising fresh money, raising fresh soldiers, but not neglecting the good old method of Italian defense—conciliatory embassies. And while the scarcity of food was every day becoming greater, they had resolved, in opposition to old precedent, not to shut out the starving country people, and the mendicants driven from the gates of other cities, who came flocking to Florence like birds from a land of snow.

These acts of a government in which the disciples of Savonarola made the strongest element were not allowed to pass without criticism. The disaffected were plentiful, and they saw clearly that the government took the worst course for the public welfare. Florence ought to join the League and make common cause with the other great Italian States, instead of drawing down their hostility by a futile adherence to a foreign ally. Florence ought to take care of her own citizens, instead of opening her gates to famine and pestilence in the shape of starving contadini and alien mendicants.

Every day the distress became sharper: every day the murmurs became louder. And, to crown the difficulties of the government, for a month and more—in obedience to a mandate from Rome—Fra Girolamo had ceased to preach. But on the arrival of the terrible news that the ships from Marseilles had been driven back, and that no corn was coming, the need for the voice that could infuse faith and patience into the people became too imperative to be resisted. In defiance of the Papal mandate the Signoria requested Savonarola to preach. And two days ago he had mounted again the pulpit of the Duomo, and had told the people only to wait and be steadfast and the divine help would certainly come.

It was a bold sermon: he consented to have his frock stripped off him if, when Florence persevered in fulfilling

the duties of piety and citizenship, God did not come to her rescue.

Yet at present, on this morning of the thirtieth, there were no signs of rescue. Perhaps if the precious Tabernacle of the Madonna dell Impruneta were brought into Florence and carried in devout procession to the Duomo, that Mother, rich in sorrows and therefore in mercy, would plead for the suffering city? For a century and a half there were records how the Florentines, suffering from drought, or flood, or famine, or pestilence, or the threat of wars, had fetched the potent image within their walls, and had found deliverance. And grateful honor had been done to her and her ancient church of L'Impruneta; the high house of Buondelmonti, patrons of the church, had to guard her hidden image with bare sword; wealth had been poured out for prayers at her shrine, for chantings, and chapels, and ever-burning lights; and lands had been added, till there was much quarreling for the privilege of serving her. The Florentines were deeply convinced of her graciousness to them, so that the sight of her tabernacle within their walls was like the parting of the cloud, and the proverb ran, that the Florentines had a Madonna who would do what they pleased.

When were they in more need of her pleading pity than now? And already, the evening before, the tabernacle containing the miraculous hidden image had been brought with high and reverend escort from L'Impruneta, the privileged spot six miles beyond the gate of San Piero that looks toward Rome, and had been deposited in the church of San Gaggio, outside the gate, whence it was to be fetched in solemn procession by all the fraternities, trades, and authorities of Florence.

But the Pitying Mother had not yet entered within the walls, and the morning arose on unchanged misery and despondency. Pestilence was hovering in the track of famine. Not only the hospitals were full, but the courtyards of private houses had been turned into refuges and infirmaries; and still there was unsheltered want. And early this morning, as usual, members of the various fraternities who made it part of their duty to bury the unfriended dead, were bearing away the corpses that had sunk by the wayside. As usual, sweet womanly forms, with the refined air and carriage of the well-born, but in the plainest garb, were moving about the streets on their daily errands of tending the sick and relieving the hungry.

One of these forms was easily distinguishable as Romola de Bardi. Clad in the simplest garment of black serge, with a plain piece of black drapery drawn over her head, so as to hide all her hair, except the bands of gold that rippled apart on her brow, she was advancing from the Ponte Vecchio toward the Por' Santa Maria—the street in a direct line with the bridge—when she found her way obstructed by the pausing of a bier, which was being carried by members of the company of San Jacopo del Popolo, in search for the unburied dead. The brethren at the head of the bier were stooping to examine something, while a group of idle workmen, with features paled and sharpened by hunger, were clustering around and all talking at once.

“He’s dead, I tell you! Messer Domeneddio has loved him well enough to take him.”

“Ah, and it would be well for us all if we could have our legs stretched out and go with our heads two or three *bracci* foremost! It’s ill standing upright with hunger to prop you.”

“Well, well, he’s an old fellow. Death has got a poor bargain. Life’s had the best of him.”

“And no Florentine, ten to one! A beggar turned out of Siena. San Giovanni defend us! They’ve no need of soldiers to fight us. They send us an army of starving men.”

“No, no! This man is one of the prisoners turned out of the Stinche. I know by the gray patch where the prison badge was.”

“Keep quiet! Lend a hand! Don’t you see the brethren are going to lift him on the bier?”

“It’s likely he’s alive enough if he could only look it. The soul may be inside him if it had only a drop of *vernaccia* to warm it.”

“In truth, I think he is not dead,” said one of the brethren, when they had lifted him on the bier. “He has perhaps only sunk down for want of food.”

“Let me try to give him some wine,” said Romola, coming forward. She loosened the small flask which she carried at her belt, and, leaning toward the prostrate body, with a deft hand she applied a small ivory implement between the teeth, and poured into the mouth a few drops of wine. The stimulus acted: the wine was evidently swallowed. She poured more, till the head was moved a little toward her, and the eyes of the old man opened full

upon her with the vague look of returning consciousness. Then for the first time a sense of complete recognition came over Romola. Those wild dark eyes opening in the sallow deep-lined face, with the white beard, which was now long again, were like an unmistakable signature to a remembered handwriting. The light of two summers had not made that image any fainter in Romola's memory: the image of the escaped prisoner, whom she had seen in the Duomo the day when Tito first wore the armor—at whose grasp Tito had paled with terror in the strange sketch she had seen in Piero's studio. A wretched tremor and palpitation seized her. Now at last, perhaps, she was going to know some secret which might be more bitter than all that had gone before. She felt an impulse to dart away as from a sight of horror; and again, a more imperious need to keep close by the side of this old man whom, the divination of keen feeling told her, her husband had injured. In the very instant of this conflict she still leaned toward him and kept her right hand ready to administer more wine, while her left was passed under his neck. Her hands trembled, but their habit of soothing helpfulness would have served to guide them without the direction of her thought.

Baldassarre was looking at *her* for the first time. The close seclusion in which Romola's trouble had kept her in the weeks preceding her flight and his arrest, had denied him the opportunity he had sought of seeing the Wife who lived in the Via de Bardi: and at this moment the descriptions he had heard of the fair golden-haired woman were all gone, like yesterday's waves.

"Will it not be well to carry him to the steps of San Stefano?" said Romola. "We shall cease then to stop up the street, and you can go on your way with your bier."

They had only to move onward for about thirty yards before reaching the steps of San Stefano, and by this time Baldassarre was able himself to make some efforts toward getting off the bier, and propping himself on the steps against the church doorway. The charitable brethren passed on, but the group of interested spectators, who had nothing to do and much to say, had considerably increased. The feeling toward the old man was not so entirely friendly now it was quite certain that he was alive, but the respect inspired by Romola's presence caused the passing remarks to be made in a rather more subdued tone than before.

"Ah, they gave him his morsel every day in the Stinche—

that's why he can't do so well without it. You and I, Cecco, know better what is to go to bed fasting."

"*Gnaffè!* that's why the Magnificent Eight have turned out some of the prisoners, that they may shelter honest people instead. But if every thief is to be brought to life with good wine and wheaten bread, we Ciompi had better go and fill ourselves in Arno while the water's plenty."

Romola had seated herself on the steps by Baldassarre, and was saying, "Can you eat a little bread now? perhaps by-and-by you will be able, if I leave it with you. I must go on, because I have promised to be at the hospital. But I will come back if you will wait here, and then I will take you to some shelter. Do you understand? Will you wait? I will come back."

He looked dreamily at her, and repeated her words, "come back." It was no wonder that his mind was enfeebled by his bodily exhaustion, but she hoped that he apprehended her meaning. She opened her basket, which was filled with pieces of soft bread, and put one of the pieces into his hand.

"Do you keep your bread for those that can't swallow, madonna?" said a rough-looking fellow, in a red night-cap, who had elbowed his way into the inmost circle of spectators—a circle that was pressing rather closely on Romola.

"If anybody isn't hungry," said another, "I say, let him alone. He's better off than people who've got craving stomachs and no breakfast."

"Yes, indeed; if a man's a mind to die, it's a time to encourage him, instead of making him come back to life against his will. Dead men want no trencher."

"Oh, you don't understand the Frate's charity," said a young man in an excellent cloth tunic, whose face showed no signs of want. "The Frate has been preaching to the birds, like Saint Anthony, and he's been telling the hawks they were made to feed the sparrows, as every good Florentine citizen was made to feed six starving beggarmen from Arezzo or Bologna. Madonna, there, is a pious Piagnone: she's not going to throw away her good bread on honest citizens who've got all the Frate's prophecies to swallow."

"Come, madonna," said he of the red cap, "the old thief doesn't eat the bread, you see: you'd better try *us*. We fast so much, we're half saints already."

The circle had narrowed till the coarse men—most of them gaunt from privation—had left hardly any margin round Romola. She had been taking from her basket a

small horn cup, into which she put the piece of bread and just moistened it with wine; and hitherto she had not appeared to heed them. But now she rose to her feet, and looked round at them. Instinctively the men who were nearest to her pushed backward a little, as if their rude nearness were the fault of those behind. Romola held out the basket of bread to the man in the night-cap, looking at him without any reproach in her glance, as she said —

“Hunger is hard to bear, I know, and you have the power to take this bread if you will. It was saved for sick women and children. You are strong men; but if you do not choose to suffer because you are strong, you have the power to take everything from the weak. You can take the bread from this basket; but I shall watch by this old man; I shall resist your taking the bread from *him*.”

For a few moments there was perfect silence, while Romola looked at the faces before her, and held out the basket of bread. Her own pale face had the slightly pinched look and the deepening of the eye-socket which indicate unusual fasting in the habitually temperate, and the large direct gaze of her hazel eyes was all the more impressive.

The man in the night-cap looked rather silly, and backed, thrusting his elbow into his neighbor's ribs with an air of moral rebuke. The backing was general, every one wishing to imply that he had been pushed forward against his will; and the young man in the fine cloth tunic had disappeared.

But at this moment the armed servitors of the Signoria, who had begun to patrol the line of streets through which the procession was to pass, came up to disperse the group which was obstructing the narrow street. The man addressed as Cecco retreated from a threatening mace up the church steps, and said to Romola, in a respectful tone—

“Madonna, if you want to go on your errands, I'll take care of the old man.”

Cecco was a wild-looking figure: a very ragged tunic, made shaggy and variegated by cloth-dust and clinging fragments of wool, gave relief to a pair of bare bony arms and a long sinewy neck; his square jaw shaded by a bristly black beard, his bridgeless nose and low forehead, made his face look as if it had been crushed down for purposes of packing, and a narrow piece of red rag tied over his ears

seemed to assist in the compression. Romola looked at him with some hesitation.

"Don't distrust me, madonna," said Cecco, who understood her look perfectly. "I am not so pretty as you, but I've got an old mother who eats my porridge for me. What! there's a heart inside me, and I've bought a candle for the most Holy Virgin before now. Besides, see there, the old fellow is eating his sop. He's hale enough: he'll be on his legs as well as the best of us, by-and-by."

"Thank you for offering to take care of him, friend," said Romola, rather penitent for her doubting glance. Then leaning to Baldassarre, she said, "Pray wait for me till I come again."

He assented with a slight movement of the head and hand, and Romola went on her way toward the hospital of San Matteo, in the Piazza di San Marco.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE UNSEEN MADONNA.

IN returning from the hospital, more than an hour later, Romola took a different road, making a wider circuit toward the river, which she reached at some distance from the Ponte Vecchio. She turned her steps toward that bridge, intending to hasten to San Stefano in search of Baldassarre. She dreaded to know more about him, yet she felt as if, in forsaking him, she would be forsaking some near claim upon her.

But when she approached the meeting of the roads where the Por Santa Maria would be on her right hand and the Ponte Vecchio on her left, she found herself involved in a crowd who suddenly fell on their knees; and she immediately knelt with them. The Cross was passing—the Great Cross of the Duomo—which headed the procession. Romola was later than she had expected to be, and now she must wait till the procession had passed. As she rose from her knees, when the Cross had disappeared, the return to a standing posture, with nothing to do but gaze, made her more conscious of her fatigue than she had been while she had been walking and occupied. A shopkeeper by her side said,—

“Madonna Romola, you will be weary of standing: Gian Fantoni will be glad to give you a seat in his house. Here is his door close at hand. Let me open it for you. What! he loves God and the Frate as we do. His house is yours.”

Romola was accustomed now to be addressed in this fraternal way by ordinary citizens, whose faces were familiar to her from her having seen them constantly in the Duomo. The idea of home had come to be identified for her less with the house in the Via de Bardi, where she sat in frequent loneliness, than with the towered circuit of Florence, where there was hardly a turn of the streets at which she was not greeted with looks of appeal or of friendliness. She was glad enough to pass through the open door on her right hand and be led by the fraternal hose-vender to an upstairs-window, where a stout woman with three children, all in the plain garb of Piagnoni, made a place for her with much reverence above the bright hanging draperies. From this corner station she could see, not only the procession pouring in solemn slowness between the lines of houses on the Ponte Vecchio, but also the river and the Lung Arno on toward the bridge of the Santa Trinità.

In sadness and in stillness came the slow procession. Not even a wailing chant broke the silent appeal for mercy: there was only the tramp of footsteps, and the faint sweep of woolen garments. They were young footsteps that were passing when Romola first looked from the window—a long train of the Florentine youth, bearing high in the midst of them the white image of the youthful Jesus, with a golden glory above his head, standing by the tall cross where the thorns and nails lay ready.

After that train of fresh beardless faces came the mysterious-looking Companies of Discipline, bound by secret rules to self-chastisement, and devout praise, and special acts of piety; all wearing a garb which concealed the whole head and face except the eyes. Every one knew that these mysterious forms were Florentine citizens of various rank, who might be seen at ordinary times going about the business of the shop, the counting-house, or the State; but no member now was discernible as son, husband, or father. They had dropped their personality, and walked as symbols of a common vow. Each company had its color and its badge, but the garb of all was a complete shroud, and left no expression but that of fellowship.

In comparison with them, the multitude of monks seemed to be strongly distinguished individuals, in spite of the common tonsure and the common frock. First came a white stream of reformed Benedictines; and then a much longer stream of the Frati Minori, or Franciscans, in that age all clad in gray, with the knotted cord round their waists, and some of them with the *zoccoli*, or wooden sandals, below their bare feet;—perhaps the most numerous order in Florence, owning many zealous members who loved mankind and hated the Dominicans. And after the gray came the black of the Augustinians of San Spirito, with more cultured human faces above it—men who had inherited the library of Boccaccio, and had made the most learned company in Florence when learning was rarer; then the white over dark of the Carmelites; and then again the unmixed black of the Servites, that famous Florentine order founded by seven merchants who forsook their gains to adore the Divine Mother.

And now the hearts of all on-lookers began to beat a little faster, either with hatred or with love, for there was a stream of black and white coming over the bridge—of black mantles over white scapularies; and every one knew that the Dominicans were coming. Those of Fiesole passed first. One black mantle parted by white after another, one tonsured head after another, and still expectation was suspended. They were very coarse mantles, all of them, and many were threadbare, if not ragged; for the Prior of San Marco had reduced the fraternities under his rule to the strictest poverty and discipline. But in the long line of black and white there was at last singled out a mantle only a little more worn than the rest, with a tonsured head above it which might not have appeared supremely remarkable to a stranger who had not seen it on bronze medals, with the sword of God as its obverse; or surrounded by an armed guard on the way to the Duomo; or transfigured by the inward flame of the orator as it looked round on a rapt multitude.

As the approach of Savonarola was discerned, none dared conspicuously to break the stillness by a sound which would rise above the solemn tramp of footsteps and the faint sweep of garments, nevertheless his ear, as well as other ears, caught a mingled sound of slow hissing that longed to be curses, and murmurs that longed to be blessings. Perhaps it was the sense that the hissing predominated which made two or three of his disciples in the fore-

ground of the crowd, at the meeting of the roads, fall on their knees as if something divine were passing. The movement of silent homage spread: it went along the sides of the streets like a subtle shock, leaving some unmoved, while it made the most bend the knee and bow the head. But the hatred, too, gathered a more intense expression; and as Savonarola passed up the Por' Santa Maria, Romola could see that some one at an upper window spat upon him.

Monks again—*Frati Umiliati*, or Humbled Brethren, from *Ognissanti*, with a glorious tradition of being the earliest workers in the wool-trade; and again more monks—*Vallombrosan* and other varieties of *Benedictines*, reminding the instructed eye by niceties of form and color that in ages of abuse, long ago, reformers had arisen who had marked a change of spirit by a change of garb; till at last the shaven crowns were at an end, and there came the train of untensured secular priests.

Then followed the twenty-one incorporated Arts of Florence in long array, with their banners floating above them in proud declaration that the bearers had their distinct functions, from the bakers of bread to the judges and notaries. And then all the secondary officers of State, beginning with the less and going on to the greater, till the line of secularities was broken by the Canons of the *Duomo*, carrying a sacred relic—the very head, enclosed in silver, of San Zenobio, immortal bishop of Florence, whose virtues were held to have saved the city perhaps a thousand years before.

Here was the nucleus of the procession. Behind the relic came the archbishop in gorgeous cope, with canopy held above him; and after him the mysterious hidden image—hidden first by rich curtains of brocade enclosing an outer painted tabernacle, but within this, by the more ancient tabernacle which had never been opened in the memory of living men, or the fathers of living men. In that inner shrine was the image of the Pitying Mother, found ages ago in the soil of *L'Impruneta*, uttering a cry as the spade struck it. Hitherto the unseen image had hardly ever been carried to the *Duomo* without having rich gifts borne before it. There was no reciting the list of precious offerings made by emulous men and communities, especially of veils and curtains and mantles. But the richest of all these, it was said, had been given by a poor abbess and her nuns, who, having no money to buy mate-

rials, wove a mantle of gold brocade with their prayers, embroidered it and adorned it with their prayers, and, finally, saw their work presented to the Blessed Virgin in the great Piazza by two beautiful youths who spread out white wings and vanished in the blue.

But to-day there were no gifts carried before the tabernacle: no donations were to be given to-day except to the poor. That had been the advice of Fra Girolamo, whose preaching never insisted on gifts to the invisible powers, but only on help to visible need; and altars had been raised at various points in front of the churches, on which the oblations for the poor were deposited. Not even a torch was carried. Surely the hidden Mother cared less for torches and brocade than for the wail of the hungry people. Florence was in extremity: she had done her utmost, and could only wait for something divine that was not in her own power.

The Frate in the torn mantle had said that help would certainly come, and many of the faint-hearted were clinging more to their faith in the Frate's word, than to their faith in the virtues of the unseen Image. But there were not a few of the fierce-hearted who thought with secret rejoicing that the Frate's word might be proved false.

Slowly the tabernacle moved forward, and knees were bent. There was a profound stillness; for the train of priests and chaplains from L'Impruneta stirred no passion in the on-lookers. The procession was about to close with the Priors and the Gonfaloniere: the long train of companies and symbols, which have their silent music and stir the mind as a chorus stirs it, was passing out of sight, and now a faint yearning hope was all that struggled with the accustomed despondency.

Romola, whose heart had been swelling, half with foreboding, half with that enthusiasm of fellowship which the life of the last two years had made as habitual to her as the consciousness of costume to a vain and idle woman, gave a deep sigh, as at the end of some long mental tension, and remained on her knees for very languor; when suddenly there flashed from between the houses on to the distant bridge something bright-colored. In the instant, Romola started up and stretched out her arms, leaning from the window, while the black drapery fell from her head, and the golden gleam of her hair and the flush in her face seemed the effect of one illumination. A shout arose in the same instant; the last troops of the pro-

cession paused, and all faces were turned toward the distant bridge.

But the bridge was passed now: the horseman was pressing at full gallop along by the Arno; the sides of his bay horse, just streaked with foam, looked all white from swiftness; his cap was flying loose by his red *becchetto*, and he waved an olive branch in his hand. It was a messenger—a messenger of good tidings! The blessed olive branch spoke afar off. But the impatient people could not wait. They rushed to meet the on-comer, and siezed his horse's rein, pushing and trampling.

And now Romola could see that the horseman was her husband, who had been sent to Pisa, a few days before on a private embassy. The recognition brought no new flash of joy into her eyes. She had checked her first impulsive attitude of expectation; but her governing anxiety was still to know what news of relief had come for Florence.

"Good news!" "Best news!" "News to be paid with hose (*novelle da calze*)!" were the vague answers with which Tito met the importunities of the crowd, until he had succeeded in pushing on his horse to the spot at the meeting of the ways where the Gonfaloniere and the Priors were awaiting him. There he paused, and, bowing low, said—

"Magnificent Signori! I have to deliver to you the joyful news that the galleys from France, laden with corn and men, have arrived safely in the port of Leghorn, by favor of a strong wind, which kept the enemy's fleet at a distance."

The words had no sooner left Tito's lips than they seemed to vibrate up the streets. A great shout rang through the air, and rushed along the river; and then another, and another; and the shouts were heard spreading along the line of procession toward the Duomo; and then there were fainter answering shouts, like the intermediate splash of distant waves in a great lake whose waters obey one impulse.

For some minutes there was no attempt to speak further: the Signoria themselves lifted up their caps, and stood bareheaded in the presence of a rescue which had come from outside the limit of their power—from that region of trust and resignation which has been in all ages called divine.

At last, as the signal was given to move forward, Tito said, with a smile—

"I ought to say, that any horse to be bestowed by the Magnificent Signoria in reward of these tidings are due, not to me, but to another man who had ridden hard to bring them, and would have been here in my place if his horse had not broken down just before he reached Signa. Meo di Sasso will doubtless be here in an hour or two, and may all the more justly claim the glory of the messenger, because he has had the chief labor and has lost the chief delight."

It was a graceful way of putting a necessary statement, and after a word of reply from the *Proposto*, or spokesman of the Signoria, this dignified extremity of the procession passed on, and Tito turned his horse's head to follow in its train, while the great bell of the Palazzo Vecchio was already beginning to swing, and give a louder voice to the people's joy.

In that moment, when Tito's attention had ceased to be imperatively directed, it might have been expected that he would look round and recognize Romola; but he was apparently engaged with his cap, which, now the eager people were leading his horse, he was able to seize and place on his head, while his right hand was still encumbered by the olive branch. He had a becoming air of lassitude after his exertions; and Romola, instead of making any effort to be recognized by him, threw her black drapery over her head again, and remained perfectly quiet. Yet she felt almost sure that Tito had seen her; he had the power of seeing everything without seeming to see it.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE VISIBLE MADONNA.

THE crowd had no sooner passed onward than Romola descended to the street, and hastened to the steps of San Stefano. Cecco had been attracted with the rest toward the Piazza, and she found Baldassare standing alone against the church door, with the horn-cup in his hand, waiting for her. There was a striking change in him: the blank, dreamy glance of a half-retained consciousness had given place to a fierceness which, as she advanced and spoke to

him, flashed upon her as if she had been its object. It was the glance of caged fury that sees its prey passing safe beyond the bars.

Romola started as the glance was turned on her, but her immediate thought was that he had seen Tito. And as she felt the look of hatred grating on her, something like a hope arose that this man might be the criminal, and that her husband might not have been guilty toward him. If she could learn that now, by bringing Tito face to face with him, and have her mind set at rest!

"If you will come with me," she said, "I can give you shelter and food until you are quite rested and strong. Will you come?"

"Yes," said Baldassarre, "I shall be glad to get my strength. I want to get my strength," he repeated, as if he were muttering to himself, rather than speaking to her.

"Come!" she said, inviting him to walk by her side, and taking the way by the Arno toward the Ponte Rubaconte as the more private road.

"I think you are not a Florentine," she said, presently, as they turned on to the bridge.

He looked round at her without speaking. His suspicious caution was more strongly upon him than usual, just now that the fog of confusion and oblivion was made denser by bodily feebleness. But she was looking at him too, and there was something in her gentle eyes which at last compelled him to answer her. But he answered cautiously —

"No, I am no Florentine; I am a lonely man."

She observed his reluctance to speak to her, and dared not question him further, lest he should desire to quit her. As she glanced at him from time to time, her mind was busy with thoughts which quenched the faint hope that there was nothing painful to be revealed about her husband. If this old man had been in the wrong, where was the cause for dread and secrecy?

They walked on in silence till they reached the entrance into the Via de Bardi, and Romola noticed that he turned and looked at her with a sudden movement as if some shock had passed through him. A few moments after, she paused at the half-open door of the court and turned toward him.

"Ah!" he said, not waiting for her to speak, "you are his wife."

"Whose wife?" said Romola.

It would have been impossible for Baldassarre to recall any name at that moment. The very force with which the image of Tito pressed upon him seemed to expel any verbal sign. He made no answer, but looked at her with strange fixedness.

She opened the door wide and showed the court covered with straw, on which lay four or five sick people, while some little children crawled or sat on it at their ease—tiny pale creatures, biting straws and gurgling.

“If you will come in,” said Romola, tremulously, “I will find you a comfortable place, and bring you some more food.”

“No, I will not come in,” said Baldassarre. But he stood still, arrested by the burden of impressions under which his mind was too confused to choose a course.

“Can I do nothing for you?” said Romola. “Let me give you some money that you may buy food. It will be more plentiful soon.”

She had put her hand into her scarsella as she spoke, and held out her palm with several *grossi* in it. She purposely offered him more than she would have given to any other man in the same circumstances. He looked at the coins a little while, and then said—

“Yes, I will take them.”

She poured the coins into his palm, and he grasped them tightly.

“Tell me,” said Romola, almost beseechingly. “What shall you——”

But Baldassarre had turned away from her, and was walking again toward the bridge. Passing from it straight on up the Via del Fosso, he came upon the shop of Niccolò Caparra, and turned toward it without a pause, as if it had been the very object of his search. Niccolò was at that moment in procession with the armorers of Florence, and there was only one apprentice in the shop. But there were all sorts of weapons in abundance hanging there, and Baldassarre’s eyes discerned what he was more hungry for than for bread. Niccolò himself would probably have refused to sell anything that might serve as a weapon to this man with signs of the prison on him; but the apprentice, less observant and scrupulous, took three *grossi* for a sharp hunting-knife without any hesitation. It was a conveniently small weapon, which Baldassarre could easily thrust within the breast of his tunic, and he walked on, feeling stronger. That sharp edge might give deadli-

ness to the thrust of an aged arm: at least it was a companion, it was a power in league with him, even if it failed. It would break against armor, but was the armor sure to be always there? In those long months while vengeance had lain in prison, baseness had perhaps become forgetful and secure. The knife had been bought with the traitor's own money. That was just. Before he took the money, he had felt what he should do with it—buy a weapon. Yes, and, if possible, food too; food to nourish the arm that would grasp the weapon, food to nourish the body which was the temple of vengeance. When he had had enough bread, he should be able to think and act—to think first how he could hide himself, lest Tito should have him dragged away again.

With that idea of hiding in his mind, Baldassarre turned up the narrowest streets, bought himself some meat and bread, and sat down under the first loggia to eat. The bells that swung out louder and louder peals of joy, laying hold of him and making him vibrate along with all the air, seemed to him simply part of that strong world which was against him.

Romola had watched Baldassarre until he had disappeared round the turning into the Piazza de Mozzi, half feeling that his departure was a relief, half reproaching herself for not seeking with more decision to know the truth about him, for not assuring herself whether there were any guiltless misery in his lot which she was not helpless to relieve. Yet what could she have done if the truth had proved to be the burden of some painful secret about her husband, in addition to the anxieties that already weighed upon her? Surely a wife was permitted to desire ignorance of a husband's wrong-doing, since she alone must not protest and warn men against him. But that thought stirred too many intricate fibres of feeling to be pursued now in her weariness. It was a time to rejoice, since help had come to Florence; and she turned into the court to tell the good news to her patients on their straw beds.

She closed the door after her, lest the bells should drown her voice, and then throwing the black drapery from her head, that the women might see her better, she stood in the midst and told them that corn was coming, and that the bells were ringing for gladness at the news. They all sat up to listen, while the children trotted or crawled toward her, and pulled her black skirts, as if they were

impatient at being all that long way off her face. She yielded to them, weary as she was, and sat down on the straw, while the little pale things peeped into her basket and pulled her hair down, and the feeble voices around her said, "The Holy Virgin be praised!" "It was the procession!" "The Mother of God has had pity on us!"

At last Romola rose from the heap of straw, too tired to try and smile any longer, saying as she turned up the stone steps—

"I will come by-and-by, to bring you your dinner."

"Bless you, madonna! bless you!" said the faint chorus, in much the same tone as that in which they had a few minutes before praised and thanked the unseen Madonna.

Romola cared a great deal for that music. She had no innate taste for tending the sick and clothing the ragged, like some women to whom the details of such work are welcome in themselves, simply as an occupation. Her early training had kept her aloof from such womanly labors; and if she had not brought to them the inspiration of her deepest feelings, they would have been irksome to her. But they had come to be the one unshaken resting-place of her mind, the one narrow pathway on which the light fell clear. If the gulf between herself and Tito which only gathered a more perceptible wideness from her attempts to bridge it by submission, brought a doubt whether, after all, the bond to which she had labored to be true might not itself be false—if she came away from her confessor, Fra Salvestro, or from some contact with the disciples of Savonarola amongst whom she worshipped, with a sickening sense that these people were miserably narrow, and with an almost impetuous reaction toward her old contempt for their superstition—she found herself recovering a firm footing in her works of womanly sympathy. Whatever else made her doubt, the help she gave to her fellow-citizens made her sure that Fra Girolamo had been right to call her back. According to his unforgotten words, her place had not been empty: it had been filled with her love and her labor. Florence had had need of her, and the more her own sorrow pressed upon her, the more gladness she felt in the memories, stretching through the two long years, of hours and moments in which she had lightened the burden of life to others. All that ardor of her nature which could no longer spend itself in the woman's tenderness for father and husband, had transformed itself into an enthusiasm of sympathy with the general life. She had ceased to think

that her own lot could be happy—had ceased to think of happiness at all: the one end of her life seemed to her to be the diminishing of sorrow.

Her enthusiasm was continually stirred to fresh vigor by the influence of Savonarola. In spite of the wearisome visions and allegories from which she recoiled in disgust when they came as stale repetitions from other lips than his, her strong affinity for his passionate sympathy and the splendor of his aims had lost none of its power. His burning indignation against the abuses and oppression that made the daily story of the Church and of States had kindled the ready fire in her too. His special care for liberty and purity of government in Florence, with his constant reference of this immediate object to the wider end of a universal regeneration, had created in her a new consciousness of the great drama of human existence in which her life was a part; and through her daily helpful contact with the less fortunate of her fellow-citizens this new consciousness became something stronger than a vague sentiment; it grew into a more and more definite motive of self-denying practice. She thought little about dogmas, and shrank from reflecting closely on the Frate's prophecies of the immediate scourge and closely-following regeneration. She had submitted her mind to his and had entered into communion with the Church, because in this way she had found an immediate satisfaction for moral needs which all the previous culture and experience of her life had left hungering. Fra Girolamo's voice had waked in her mind a reason for living, apart from personal enjoyment and personal affection; but it was a reason that seemed to need feeding with greater forces than she possessed within herself, and her submissive use of all offices of the Church was simply a watching and waiting if by any means fresh strength might come. The pressing problem for Romola just then was not to settle questions of controversy, but to keep alive that flame of unselfish emotion by which a life of sadness might still be a life of active love.

Her trust in Savonarola's nature as greater than her own made a large part of the strength she had found. And the trust was not to be lightly shaken. It is not force of intellect which causes ready repulsion from the aberration and eccentricities of greatness, any more than it is force of vision that causes the eye to explore the warts on a face bright with human expression; it is simply the negation of

high sensibilities. Romola was so deeply moved by the grand energies of Savonarola's nature that she found herself listening patiently to all dogmas and prophecies, when they came in the vehicle of his ardent faith and believing utterance. *

No soul is desolate as long as there is a human being for whom it can feel trust and reverence. Romola's trust in Savonarola was something like a rope suspended securely by her path, making her step elastic while she grasped it; if it were suddenly removed, no firmness of the ground she trod could save her from staggering, or perhaps from falling.

CHAPTER XLV.

AT THE BARBER SHOP.

AFTER that welcome appearance as the messenger with the olive-branch, which was an unpromised favor of fortune, Tito had other commissions to fulfill of a more premeditated character. He paused at the Palazzo Vecchio, and awaited there the return of the Ten, who managed external and war affairs, that he might duly deliver to them the results of his private mission to Pisa, intended as a preliminary to an avowed embassy of which Bernardo Rucellai was to be the head, with the object of coming, if possible, to a pacific understanding with the Emperor Maximilian and the League.

Tito's talents for diplomatic work had been well ascertained, and as he gave with fullness and precision the results of his inquiries and interviews, Bernardo del Nero, who was at that time one of the Ten, could not withhold his admiration. He would have withheld it if he could; for his original dislike of Tito had returned, and become stronger, since the sale of the library. Romola had never uttered a word to her godfather on the circumstances of the sale, and Bernardo had understood her silence as a prohibition to him to enter on the subject, but he felt sure

* He himself had had occasion enough to note the efficacy of that vehicle. "If," he says, in the *Compendium Revelationum*, "you speak of such as have not heard these things from me, I admit that they who disbelieve are more than they who believe, because it is one thing to hear him who inwardly feels these things, and another to hear him who feels them not: * * * and therefore it is well said by St. Jerome, 'Habet nescio quid latentis energię vivæ vocis actus, et in aures discipuli de auctoris ore transfusa fortis sonat.'"

that the breach of her father's wish had been a blighting grief to her, and the old man's observant eyes discerned other indications that her married life was not happy.

"Ah," he said inwardly, "that doubtless is the reason she has taken to listening to Fra Girolamo, and going amongst the Piagnoni, which I never expected from her. These women, if they are not happy, and have no children, must either take to folly or to some overstrained religion that makes them think they've got all heaven's work on their shoulders. And as for my poor child Romola, it is as I always said—the cramming with Latin and Greek has left her as much a woman as if she had done nothing all day but prick her fingers with the needle. And this husband of hers, who gets employed everywhere, because he's a tool with a smooth handle, I wish Tornabuoni and the rest may not find their fingers cut. Well, well, *solco, torto, sacco dritto*—many a full sack comes from a crooked furrow; and he who will be captain of none but honest men will have small hire to pay."

With this long-established conviction that there could be no moral sifting of political agents, the old Florentine abstained from all interference in Tito's disfavor. Apart from what must be kept sacred and private for Romola's sake, Bernardo had nothing direct to allege against the useful Greek, except that he was a Greek, and that he, Bernardo, did not like him; for the doubleness of feigning attachment to the government, while at heart a Medicean, was common to Tito with more than half the Medicean party. He only feigned with more skill than the rest: that was all. So Bernardo was simply cold to Tito, who returned the coldness with a scrupulous, distant respect. And it was still the notion in Florence that the old tie between Bernardo and Bardo made any service done to Romola's husband an acceptable homage to her godfather.

After delivering himself of his charge at the Old Palace, Tito felt that the avowed official work of the day was done. He was tired and adust with long riding; but he did not go home. There were certain things in his scarsella and on his mind, from which he wished to free himself as soon as possible, but the opportunities must be found so skillfully that they must not seem to be sought. He walked from the Palazzo in a sauntering fashion toward the Piazza del Duomo. The procession was at an end now, but the bells were still ringing, and the people were moving about the streets restlessly, longing for some more definite vent

to their joy. If the Frate could have stood up in the great Piazza and preached to them, they might have been satisfied, but now, in spite of the new discipline which declared Christ to be the special King of the Florentines and required all pleasures to be of a Christian sort, there was a secret longing in many of the youngsters who shouted "Viva Gesù!" for a little vigorous stone-throwing in sign of thankfulness.

Tito, as he passed along, could not escape being recognized by some as the welcome bearer of the olive-branch, and could only rid himself of an inconvenient ovation, chiefly in the form of eager questions, by telling those who pressed on him that Meo di Sasso, the true messenger from Leghorn, must now be entering, and might certainly be met toward the Porta San Frediano. He could tell much more than Tito knew.

Freeing himself from importunities in this adroit manner, he made his way to the Piazza del Duomo, casting his long eyes round the space with an air of the utmost carelessness, but really seeking to detect some presence which might furnish him with one of his desired opportunities. The fact of the procession having terminated at the Duomo made it probable that there would be more than the usual concentration of loungers and talkers in the Piazza and round Nello's shop. It was as he expected. There was a group leaning against the rails near the north gates of the Baptistery, so exactly what he sought, that he looked more indifferent than ever, and seemed to recognize the tallest member of the group entirely by chance as he had half passed him, just turning his head to give him a slight greeting, while he tossed the end of his *becchetto* over his left shoulder.

Yet the tall, broad-shouldered personage greeted in that slight way looked like one who had considerable claims. He wore a richly-embroidered tunic, with a great show of linen, after the newest French mode, and at his belt there hung a sword and poniard of fine workmanship. His hat, with a red plume in it, seemed a scornful protest against the gravity of Florentine costume, which had been exaggerated to the utmost under the influence of the Piagnoni. Certain undefinable indications of youth made the breadth of his face and the large diameter of his waist appear the more emphatically a stamp of coarseness, and his eyes had that rude desecrating stare at all men and things

which to a refined mind is as intolerable as a bad odor or a flaring light.

He and his companions, also young men dressed expensively and wearing arms, were exchanging jokes with that sort of ostentatious laughter which implies a desire to prove that the laughter is not mortified though some people might suspect it. There were good reasons for such a suspicion; for this broad-shouldered man with a red feather was Dolfo Spini, leader of the Compagnacci, or Evil Companions—that is to say, of all the dissolute young men belonging to the old aristocratic party, enemies of the Mediceans, enemies of the popular government, but still more bitter enemies of Savonarola. Dolfo Spini, heir of the great house with the loggia, over the bridge of the Santa Trinità, had organized these young men into an armed band, as sworn champions of extravagant suppers and all the pleasant sins of the flesh, against reforming pietists who threatened to make the world chaste and temperate to so intolerable a degree that there would soon be no reason for living, except the extreme unpleasantness of the alternative. Up to this very morning he had been loudly declaring that Florence was given up to famine and ruin entirely through its blind adherence to the advice of the Frate, and that there could be no salvation for Florence but in joining the League and driving the Frate out of the city—sending him to Rome, in fact, whither he ought to have gone long ago in obedience to the summons of the Pope. It was suspected, therefore, that Messer Dolfo Spini's heart was not aglow with pure joy at the unexpected succors which had come in apparent fulfillment of the Frate's prediction, and the laughter, which was ringing out afresh as Tito joined the group at Nello's door, did not serve to dissipate the suspicion. For leaning against the door-post in the centre of the group was a close-shaven, keen-eyed personage, named Niccolò Macchiavelli, who, young as he was, had penetrated all the small secrets of egoism.

“Messer Dolfo's head,” he was saying, “is more of a pumpkin than I thought. I measure men's dullness by the devices they trust in for deceiving others. Your duller animal of all is he who grins and says he doesn't mind just after he has had his shins kicked. If I were a trifle duller now,” he went on, smiling as the circle opened to admit Tito, “I should pretend to be fond of this Melema, who has got a secretaryship that would exactly suit me—as

if Latin ill-paid could love better Latin that's better paid! Melema, you are a pestiferously clever fellow, very much in my way, and I'm sorry to hear you've had another piece of good-luck to-day."

"Questionable luck, Niccolò," said Tito, touching him on the shoulder in a friendly way; "I have got nothing by it yet but being laid hold of and breathed upon by wool-beaters, when I am as soiled and battered with riding as a *tabellario* (letter-carrier) from Bologna."

"Ah! you want a touch of my art, Messer Oratore," said Nello, who had come forward at the sound of Tito's voice; "your chin, I perceive, has yesterday's crop upon it. Come, come—consign yourself to the priest of all the Muses. Sandro, quick with the lather!"

"In truth, Nello, that is just what I most desire at this moment," said Tito, seating himself; "and that was why I turned my steps toward thy shop, instead of going home at once, when I had done my business at the Palazzo."

"Yes, indeed, it is not fitting that you should present yourself to Madonna Romola with a rusty chin and a tangled *zazzera*. Nothing that is not dainty ought to approach the Florentine lily; though I see her constantly going about like a sunbeam amongst the rags that line our corners—if indeed she is not more like a moonbeam now, for I thought yesterday, when I met her, that she looked as pale and worn as that fainting Madonna of Fra Giovanni's. You must see to it, my *bel erudito*: she keeps too many fasts and vigils in your absence."

Tito gave a melancholy shrug. "It is too true, Nello. She has been depriving herself of half her proper food every day during this famine. But what can I do? Her mind has been set all aflame. A husband's influence is powerless against the Frate's."

"As every other influence is likely to be, that of the Holy Father included," said Domenico Cennini, one of the group at the door, who had turned in with Tito. "I don't know whether you have gathered anything at Pisa about the way the wind sits at Rome, Melema?"

"Secrets of the council chamber, Messer Domenico!" said Tito, smiling and opening his palms in a deprecatory manner. "An envoy must be as dumb as a father confessor."

"Certainly, certainly," said Cennini. "I ask for no breach of that rule. Well, my belief is, that if his Holi-

ness were to drive Fra Girolamo to extremity, the Frate would move heaven and earth to get a General Council of the Church—ay, and would get it too; and I, for one, should not be sorry, though I'm no Piagnone."

"With leave of your greater experience, Messer Domenico," said Macchiavelli, "I must differ from you—not in your wish to see a General Council, which might reform the Church, but in your belief that the Frate will checkmate his Holiness. The Frate's game is an impossible one. If he had contented himself with preaching against the vices of Rome, and with prophesying that in some way, not mentioned, Italy would be scourged, depend upon it Pope Alexander would have allowed him to spend his breath in that way as long as he could find hearers. Such spiritual blasts as those knock no walls down. But the Frate wants to be something more than a spiritual trumpet: he wants to be a lever, and what is more, he *is* a lever. He wants to spread the doctrine of Christ by maintaining a popular government in Florence, and the Pope, as I know, on the best authority, has private views to the contrary."

"Then Florence will stand by the Frate," Cennini broke in with some fervor. "I myself should prefer that he would let his prophesying alone, but if our freedom to choose our own government is to be attacked—I am an obedient son of the Church, but I would vote for resisting Pope Alexander the Sixth, as our forefathers resisted Pope Gregory the Eleventh."

"But pardon me, Messer Domenico," said Macchiavelli, sticking his thumbs into his belt, and speaking with that cool enjoyment of exposition which surmounts every other force in discussion. "Have you correctly seized the Frate's position? How is it that he has become a lever, and made himself worth attacking by an acute man like his Holiness? Because he has got the ear of the people: because he gives them threats and promises, which they believe come straight from God, not only about hell, purgatory, and paradise, but about Pisa and our Great Council. But let events go against him, so as to shake the people's faith, and the cause of his power will be the cause of his fall. He is accumulating three sorts of hatred on his head—the hatred of average mankind against every one who wants to lay on them a strict yoke of virtue; the hatred of the stronger powers in Italy who want to farm Florence for their own purposes; and the hatred of the

people, to whom he has ventured to promise good in this world, instead of confining his promises to the next. If a prophet is to keep his power, he must be a prophet like Mahomet, with an army at his back, that when the people's faith is fainting it may be frightened into life again."

"Rather sum up the three sorts of hatred in one," said Francesco Cei, impetuously, "and say he has won the hatred of all men who have sense and honesty, by inventing hypocritical lies. His proper place is among the false prophets in the Inferno, who walk with their heads turned hindforemost."

"You are too angry, my Francesco," said Macchiavelli, smiling; "you poets are apt to cut the clouds in your wrath. I am no votary of the Frate's, and would not lay down my little finger for his veracity. But veracity is a plant of paradise, and the seeds have never flourished beyond the walls. You, yourself, my Francesco, tell poetical lies only; partly compelled by the poet's fervor, partly to please your audience; but you object to lies in prose. Well, the Frate differs from you as to the boundary of poetry, that's all. When he gets into the pulpit of the Duomo, he has the fervor within him, and without him he has the audience to please. Ecco!"

"You are somewhat lax there, Niccolò," said Cennini, gravely. "I myself believe in the Frate's integrity, though I don't believe in his prophecies, and as long as his integrity is not disproved, we have a popular party strong enough to protect him and resist foreign interference."

"A party that seems strong enough," said Macchiavelli, with a shrug, and an almost imperceptible glance toward Tito, who was abandoning himself with much enjoyment to Nello's combing and scenting. "But how many Mediceans are there among you? How many who will not be turned round by a private grudge?"

"As to the Mediceans," said Cennini, "I believe there is very little genuine feeling left on behalf of the Medici. Who would risk much for Piero de Medici? A few old staunch friends, perhaps, like Bernardo del Nero; but even some of those most connected with the family are hearty friends of the popular government, and would exert themselves for the Frate. I was talking to Giannozzo Pucci only a little while ago, and I am convinced there's nothing he would set his face against more than against any attempt to alter the new order of things."

"You are right there, Messer Domenico," said Tito, with a laughing meaning in his eyes, as he rose from the shaving-chair; "and I fancy the tender passion came in aid of hard theory there. I am persuaded there was some jealousy at the bottom of Giannozzo's alienation from Piero de Medici; else so amiable a creature as he would never feel the bitterness he sometimes allows to escape him in that quarter. He was in the procession with you, I suppose?"

"No," said Cennini; "he is at his villa—went there three days ago."

Tito was settling his cap and glancing down at his splashed hose as if he hardly heeded the answer. In reality he had obtained a much-desired piece of information. He had at that moment in his scarsella a crushed gold ring which he had engaged to deliver to Giannozzo Pucci. He had received it from an envoy of Piero de Medici, whom he had ridden out of his way to meet at Certaldo on the Siena road. Since Pucci was not in the town, he would send the ring by Fra Michele, a Carthusian lay Brother in the service of the Mediceans, and the receipt of that sign would bring Pucci back to hear the verbal part of Tito's mission.

"Behold him!" said Nello, flourishing his comb and pointing it at Tito, "the handsomest scholar in the world or in the wolds,* now he has passed through my hands! A trifle thinner in the face, though, than when he came in his first bloom to Florence—eh? and, I vow, there are some lines just faintly hinting themselves about your mouth, Messer Oratore! Ah, mind is an enemy to beauty! I myself was thought beautiful by the women at one time—when I was in my swaddling-bands. But now—oimè! I carry my unwritten poems in cipher on my face!"

Tito, laughing with the rest as Nello looked at himself tragically in the hand-mirror, made a sign of farewell to the company generally, and took his departure.

"I'm of our old Piero di Cosimo's mind," said Francesco Cei. "I don't half like Melema. That trick of smiling gets stronger than ever—no wonder he has lines about the mouth."

"He's too successful," said Macchiavelli, playfully, "I'm sure there's something wrong about him, else he wouldn't have that secretaryship."

"He's an able man," said Cennini, in a tone of judicial

* "Del mondo o di maremma."

fairness. "I and my brother have always found him useful with our Greek sheets, and he gives great satisfaction to the Ten. I like to see a young man work his way upward by merit. And the secretary Scala, who befriended him from the first, thinks highly of him still, I know."

"Doubtless," said a notary in the background. "He writes Scala's official letters for him, or corrects them, and gets well paid for it too."

"I wish Messer Bartolommeo would pay *me* to doctor his gouty Latin," said Macchiavelli, with a shrug. "Did *he* tell you about the pay, Ser Ceccone, or was it Melema himself?" he added, looking at the notary with a face ironically innocent.

"Melema? no, indeed," answered Ser Ceccone. "He is as close as a nut. He never brags. That's why he's employed everywhere. They say he's getting rich with doing all sorts of underhand work."

"It is a little too bad," said Macchiavelli, "and so many able notaries out of employment!"

"Well, I must say I thought that was a nasty story a year or two ago about the man who said he had stolen jewels," said Cei. "It got hushed up somehow: but I remember Piero di Cosimo said, at the time, he believed there was something in it, for he saw Melema's face when the man laid hold of him, and he never saw a visage so 'painted with fear,' as our sour old Dante says."

"Come, spit no more of that venom, Francesco," said Nello, getting indignant, "else I shall consider it a public duty to cut your hair awry the next time I get you under my scissors. That story of the stolen jewels was a lie. Bernardo Rucellai and the Magnificent Eight knew all about it. The man was a dangerous madman, and he was very properly kept out of mischief in prison. As for our Piero di Cosimo, his wits are running after the wind of Mongibello: he has such an extravagant fancy that he would take a lizard for a crocodile. No: that story has been dead and buried too long—our noses object to it."

"It is true," said Macchiavelli. "You forget the danger of the precedent, Francesco. The next mad beggarman may accuse you of stealing his verses, or me, God help me! of stealing his coppers. Ah!" he went on, turning toward the door, "Dolfo Spini has carried his red feather out of the Piazza. That captain of swaggerers would like the Republic to lose Pisa just for the chance of seeing the people tear the frock off the Frate's back.

With your pardon, Francesco — I know he is a friend of yours — there are few things I should like better than to see him play the part of Capo d'Oca, who went out to the tournament blowing his trumpets and returned with them in a bag."

CHAPTER XLVI.

BY A STREET LAMP.

THAT evening, when it was dark and threatening rain, Romola, returning with Maso and the lantern by her side, from the hospital of San Matteo, which she had visited after vespers, encountered her husband just issuing from the monastery of San Marco. Tito, who had gone out again shortly after his arrival in the Via de Bardi, and had seen little of Romola during the day, immediately proposed to accompany her home, dismissing Maso, whose short steps annoyed him. It was only usual for him to pay her such an official attention when it was obviously demanded from him. Tito and Romola never jarred, never remonstrated with each other. They were too hopelessly alienated in their inner life ever to have that contest which is an effort toward agreement. They talked of all affairs, public and private, with careful adherence to an adopted course. If Tito wanted a supper prepared in the old library, now pleasantly furnished as a banqueting-room, Romola assented, and saw that everything needful was done: and Tito, on his side, left her entirely uncontrolled in her daily habits, accepting the help she offered him in transcribing or making digests, and in return meeting her conjectured want of supplies for her charities. Yet he constantly, as on this very morning, avoided exchanging glances with her; affected to believe that she was out of the house, in order to avoid seeking her in her own room; and playfully attributed to her a perpetual preference of solitude to his society.

In the first ardor of her self-conquest, after she had renounced her resolution of flight, Romola had made many timid efforts toward the return of a frank relation between them. But to her such a relation could only come by open speech about their differences, and the attempt to arrive at a moral understanding; while Tito could only be

saved from alienation from her by such a recovery of her effusive tenderness as would have presupposed oblivion of their differences. He cared for no explanation between them; he felt any thorough explanation impossible: he would have cared to have Romola fond again, and to her, fondness was impossible. She could be submissive and gentle, she could repress any sign of repulsion; but tenderness was not to be feigned. She was helplessly conscious of the result: her husband was alienated from her.

It was an additional reason why she should be carefully kept outside of secrets which he would in no case have chosen to communicate to her. With regard to his political action he sought to convince her that he considered the cause of the Medici hopeless; and that on that practical ground, as well as in theory, he heartily served the popular government, in which she had now a warm interest. But impressions subtle as odors made her uneasy about his relations with San Marco. She was painfully divided between the dread of seeing any evidence to arouse her suspicions, and the impulse to watch lest any harm should come that she might have arrested.

As they walked together this evening, Tito said—"The business of the day is not yet quite ended for me. I shall conduct you to our door, my Romola, and then I must fulfill another commission, which will take me an hour, perhaps, before I can return and rest, as I very much need to do."

And then he talked amusingly of what he had seen at Pisa, until they were close upon a loggia, near which there hung a lamp before a picture of the Virgin. The street was a quiet one, and hitherto they had passed few people; but now there was a sound of many approaching footsteps and confused voices.

"We shall not get home without a wetting, unless we take shelter under this convenient loggia," Tito said, hastily, hurrying Romola, with a slightly startled movement, up the step of the loggia.

"Surely it is useless to wait for this small drizzling rain," said Romola, in surprise.

"No: I felt it becoming heavier. Let us wait a little." With that wakefulness to the faintest indication which belongs to a mind habitually in a state of caution, Tito had detected by the glimmer of the lamp that the leader of the advancing group wore a red feather and a glittering sword-hilt—in fact, was almost the last person in the world

he would have chosen to meet at this hour with Romola by his side. He had already during the day had one momentous interview with Dolfo Spini, and the business he had spoken of to Romola as yet to be done was a second interview with that personage, a sequence of the visit he had paid at San Marco. Tito, by a long-preconcerted plan, had been the bearer of letters to Savonarola—carefully-forged letters; one of them, by a strategem, bearing the very signature and seal of the Cardinal of Naples, who of all the Sacred College had most exerted his influence at Rome in favor of the Frate. The purport of the letters was to state that the Cardinal was on his progress from Pisa, and, unwilling for strong reasons to enter Florence, yet desirous of taking counsel with Savonarola at this difficult juncture, intended to pause this very day at San Casciano, about ten miles from the city, whence he would ride out the next morning in the plain garb of a priest, and meet Savonarola, as if casually, five miles on the Florence road, two hours after sunrise. The plot, of which these forged letters were the initial step, was that Dolfo Spini with a band of his Compagnacci was to be posted in ambush on the road, at a lonely spot about five miles from the gates; that he was to seize Savonarola with the Dominican brother who would accompany him according to rule, and deliver him over to a small detachment of Milanese horse in readiness near San Gasciano, by whom he was to be carried into the Roman territory.

There was a strong chance that the penetrating Frate would suspect a trap, and decline to incur the risk, which he had for some time avoided, of going beyond the city walls. Even when he preached, his friends held it necessary that he should be attended by an armed guard; and here he was called upon to commit himself to a solitary road, with no other attendant than a fellow-monk. On this ground the minimum of time had been given him for decision, and the chance in favor of his acting on the letters was, that the eagerness with which his mind was set on the combining of interests within and without the Church toward the procuring of a General Council, and also the expectation of immediate service from the Cardinal in the actual juncture of his contest with the Pope, would triumph over his shrewdness and caution in the brief space allowed for deliberation.

Tito had had an audience of Savonarola, having declined to put the letters into any hands but his, and with con-

summate art had admitted that incidentally, and by inference, he was able so far to conjecture their purport as to believe they referred to a rendezvous outside the gates, in which case he urged that the Frate should seek an armed guard from the Signoria, and offered his services in carrying the request with the utmost privacy. Savonarola had replied briefly that this was impossible: an armed guard was incompatible with privacy. He spoke with a flashing eye, and Tito felt convinced that he meant to incur the risk.

Tito himself did not much care for the result. He managed his affairs so cleverly, that all results, he considered, must turn to his advantage. Whichever party came uppermost, he was secure of favor and money. That is an indecorously naked statement; the fact, clothed as Tito habitually clothed it, was that his acute mind, discerning the equal hollowness of all parties, took the only rational course in making them subservient to his own interest.

If Savonarola fell into the snare, there were diamonds in question and papal patronage; if not, Tito's adroit agency had strengthened his position with Savonarola and with Spini, while any confidences he obtained from them made him the more valuable as an agent of the Mediceans.

But Spini was an inconvenient colleague. He had cunning enough to delight in plots, but not the ability or self-command necessary to so complex an effort as secrecy. He frequently got excited with drinking, for even sober Florence had its "Beoni," or toppers, both lay and clerical, who became loud at taverns and private banquets; and in spite of the agreement between him and Tito, that their public recognition of each other should invariably be of the coolest sort, there was always the possibility that on an evening encounter he would be suddenly blurting and affectionate. The delicate sign of casting the *becchetto* over the left shoulder was understood in the morning, but the strongest hint short of a threat might not suffice to keep off a fraternal grasp of the shoulder in the evening.

Tito's chief hope now was that Dolfo Spini had not caught sight of him, and the hope would have been well founded if Spini had had no clearer view of him than he had caught of Spini. But, himself in shadow, he had seen Tito illuminated for an instant by the direct rays of the lamp, and Tito in his way was as strongly marked a personage as the captain of the Compagnacci. Romola's

black-shrouded figure had escaped notice, and she now stood behind her husband's shoulder in the corner of the loggia. Tito was not left to hope long.

"Ha! my carrier-pigeon!" grated Spini's harsh voice, in what he meant to be an undertone, while his hand grasped Tito's shoulder, "what did you run into hiding for? You didn't know it was comrades who were coming. It's well I caught sight of you; it saves time. What of the chase to-morrow morning? Will the bald-headed game rise? Are the falcons to be got ready?"

If it had been in Tito's nature to feel an access of rage, he would have felt it against this bull-faced accomplice, unfit either for a leader or a tool. His lips turned white, but his excitement came from the pressing difficulty of choosing a safe device. If he attempted to hush Spini, that would only deepen Romola's suspicion, and he knew her well enough to know that if some strong alarm were roused in her, she was neither to be silenced nor hoodwinked; on the other hand, if he repelled Spini angrily the wine-breathing Compagnaccio might become savage, being more ready at resentment than at the divination of motives. He adopted a third course, which proved that Romola retained one sort of power over him—the power of dread.

He pressed her hand, as if intending to hint to her, and said in a good-humored tone of comradeship—

"Yes, my Dolfo, you may prepare in all security. But take no trumpets with you."

"Don't be afraid," said Spini, a little piqued. "No need to play Ser Saccante with me. I know where the devil keeps his tail as well as you do. What! he swallowed the bait whole? The prophetic nose didn't scent the hook at all?" he went on, lowering his tone a little, with a blundering sense of secrecy.

"The brute will not be satisfied till he has emptied the bag," thought Tito; but aloud he said—"Swallowed all as easily as you swallow a cup of Trebbiano. Ha! I see torches; there must be a dead body coming. The pestilence has been spreading, I hear."

"Santiddio! I hate the sight of those biers. Good night," said Spini, hastily moving off.

The torches were really coming, but they preceded a church dignitary who was returning homeward; the suggestion of the dead body and the pestilence was Tito's device for getting rid of Spini without telling him to go.

The moment he had moved away, Tito turned to Romola, and said, quietly—

“Do not be alarmed by anything that *bestia* has said, my Romola. We will go on now: I think the rain has not increased.”

She was quivering with indignant resolution; it was of no use for Tito to speak in that unconcerned way. She distrusted every word he could utter.

“I will not go on,” she said. “I will not move nearer home until I have some security against this treachery being perpetrated.”

“Wait, at least, until these torches have passed,” said Tito, with perfect self-command, but with a new rising of dislike to a wife who this time, he foresaw, might have the power of thwarting him in spite of the husband’s pre-dominance.

The torches passed, with the Vicario dell Arcivescovo, and due reverence was done by Tito, but Romola saw nothing outward. If for the defeat of this treachery, in which she believed with all the force of long presentiment, it had been necessary at that moment for her to spring on her husband and hurl herself with him down a precipice, she felt as if she could have done it. Union with this man! At that moment the self-quelling discipline of two years seemed to be nullified: she felt nothing but that they were divided.

They were nearly in darkness again, and could only see each other’s faces dimly.

“Tell me the truth, Tito—this time tell me the truth,” said Romola, in a low quivering voice. “It will be safer for you.”

“Why should I desire to tell you anything else, my angry saint?” said Tito, with a slight touch of contempt, which was the vent of his annoyance; “since the truth is precisely that over which you have most reason to rejoice—namely, that my knowing a plot of Spini’s enables me to secure the Frate from falling a victim to it.”

“What is the plot?”

“That I decline to tell,” said Tito. “It is enough that the Frate’s safety will be secured.”

“It is a plot for drawing him outside the gates that Spini may murder him.”

“There has been no intention of murder. It is simply a plot for compelling him to obey the Pope’s summons to Rome. But as I serve the popular government, and think

the Frate's presence here is a necessary means of maintaining it at present, I choose to prevent his departure. You may go to sleep with entire ease of mind to-night."

For a moment Romola was silent. Then she said, in a voice of anguish, "Tito, it is of no use: I have no belief in you."

She could just discern his action as he shrugged his shoulders, and spread out his palms in silence. That cold dislike which is the anger of unimpassioned beings was hardening within him.

"If the Frate leaves the city—if any harm happens to him," said Romola, after a slight pause, in a new tone of indignant resolution,—“I will declare what I have heard to the Signoria, and you will be disgraced. What if I am your wife?” she went on, impetuously; “I will be disgraced with you. If we are united, I am that part of you that will save you from crime. Others shall not be betrayed.”

“I am quite aware of what you would be likely to do, *anima mia*,” said Tito, in the coolest of his liquid tones; “therefore if you have a small amount of reasoning at your disposal just now, consider that if you believe me in nothing else, you may believe me when I say I will take care of myself, and not put it in your power to ruin me.”

“Then you assure me that the Frate is warned—he will not go beyond the gates?”

“He shall not go beyond the gates.”

There was a moment's pause, but distrust was not to be expelled.

“I will go back to San Marco now and find out,” Romola said, making a movement forward.

“You shall not!” said Tito, in a bitter whisper, seizing her wrists with all his masculine force. “I am master of you. You shall not set yourself in opposition to me.”

There were passers-by approaching. Tito had heard them, and that was why he spoke in a whisper. Romola was too conscious of being mastered to have struggled, even if she had remained unconscious that witnesses were at hand. But she was aware now of footsteps and voices, and her habitual sense of personal dignity made her at once yield to Tito's movement toward leading her from the loggia.

They walked on in silence for some time, under the small drizzling rain. The first rush of indignation and alarm in Romola had begun to give way to more compli-

cated feelings, which rendered speech and action difficult. In that simpler state of vehemence, open opposition to the husband from whom she felt her soul revolting had had the aspect of temptation for her; it seemed the easiest of all courses. But now, habits of self-questioning, memories of impulse subdued, and that proud reserve which all discipline had left unmodified, began to emerge from the flood of passion. The grasp of her wrists, which asserted her husband's physical predominance, instead of arousing a new fierceness in her, as it might have done if her impetuosity had been of a more vulgar kind, had given her a momentary shuddering horror at this form of contest with him. It was the first time they had been in declared hostility to each other since her flight and return, and the check given to her ardent resolution then, retained the power to arrest her now. In this altered condition her mind began to dwell on the probabilities that would save her from any desperate course: Tito would not risk betrayal by her; whatever had been his original intention, he must be determined now by the fact that she knew of the plot. She was not bound now to do anything else than to hang over him that certainty, that if he deceived her, her lips would not be closed. And then, it was possible—yes, she must cling to that possibility till it was disproved—that Tito had never meant to aid in the betrayal of the Frate.

Tito, on his side, was busy with thoughts, and did not speak again till they were near home. Then he said—

“Well, Romola, have you now had time to recover calmness? If so, you can supply your want of belief in me by a little rational inference: you can see, I presume, that if I had had any intention of furthering Spini's plot, I should now be aware that the possession of a fair Piagnone for my wife, who knows the secret of the plot, would be a serious obstacle in my way.”

Tito assumed the tone which was just then the easiest to him, conjecturing that in Romola's present mood persuasive deprecation would be lost upon her.

“Yes, Tito,” she said, in a low voice, “I think you believe that I would guard the Republic from further treachery. You are right to believe it: if the Frate is betrayed, I will denounce you.” She paused a moment, and then said with an effort, “But it was not so. I have perhaps spoken too hastily—you never meant it. Only, why will you seem to be that man's comrade?”

"Such relations are inevitable to practical men, my Romola," said Tito, gratified by discerning the struggle within her. "You fair creatures live in the clouds. Pray go to rest with an easy heart," he added, opening the door for her.

CHAPTER XLVII.

CHECK.

TITO's clever arrangements had been unpleasantly frustrated by trivial incidents which could not enter into a clever man's calculations. It was very seldom that he walked with Romola in the evening, yet he had happened to be walking with her precisely on this evening when her presence was supremely inconvenient. Life was so complicated a game that the devices of skill were liable to be defeated at every turn by air-blown chances, incalculable as the descent of thistle-down.

It was not that he minded about the failure of Spini's plot, but he felt an awkward difficulty in so adjusting his warning to Savonarola on the one hand, and to Spini on the other, as not to incur suspicion. Suspicion roused in the popular party might be fatal to his reputation and ostensible position in Florence; suspicion roused in Dolfo Spini might be as disagreeable in its effects as the hatred of a fierce dog not to be chained.

If Tito went forthwith to the monastery to warn Savonarola before the monks went to rest, his warning would follow so closely on his delivery of the forged letters that he could not escape unfavorable surmises. He could not warn Spini at once without telling him the true reason, since he could not immediately allege the discovery that Savonarola had changed his purpose; and he knew Spini well enough to know that his understanding would discern nothing but that Tito had "turned round" and frustrated the plot. On the other hand, by deferring his warning to Savonarola until the morning, he would be almost sure to lose the opportunity of warning Spini that the Frate had changed his mind; and the band of Compagnacci would come back in all the rage of disappointment. This last, however, was the risk he chose, trusting to his power of soothing Spini by assuring him that the failure was due only to the Frate's caution.

Tito was annoyed. If he had had to smile it would have been an unusual effort to him. He was determined not to encounter Romola again, and he did not go home that night.

She watched through the night, and never took off her clothes. She heard the rain become heavier and heavier. She liked to hear the rain: the stormy heavens seemed a safeguard against men's devices, compelling them to inaction. And Romola's mind was again assailed, not only by the utmost doubt of her husband, but by doubt as to her own conduct. What lie might he not have told her? What project might he not have, of which she was still ignorant? Every one who trusted Tito was in danger; it was useless to try and persuade herself of the contrary. And was not she selfishly listening to the promptings of her own pride, when she shrank from warning men against him? "If her husband was a malefactor, her place was in the prison by his side"—that might be; she was contented to fulfill that claim. But was she, a wife, to allow a husband to inflict the injuries that would make him a malefactor, when it might be in her power to prevent them? Prayer seemed impossible to her. The activity of her thought excluded a mental state of which the essence is expectant passivity.

The excitement became stronger and stronger. Her imagination, in a state of morbid activity, conjured up possible schemes by which, after all, Tito would have eluded her threat; and toward daybreak the rain became less violent, till at last it ceased, the breeze rose again and dispersed the clouds, and the morning fell clear on all the objects around her. It made her uneasiness all the less endurable. She wrapped her mantle round her, and ran up to the loggia; as if there could be anything in the wide landscape that might determine her action; as if there could be anything but roofs hiding the line of street along which Savonarola might be walking toward betrayal.

If she went to her godfather, might she not induce him, without any specific revelation, to take measures for preventing Fra Girolamo from passing the gates? But that might be too late. Romola thought, with new distress, that she had failed to learn any guiding details from Tito, and it was already long past seven. She must go to San Marco: there was nothing else to be done.

She hurried down the stairs, she went out into the street without looking at her sick people, and walked

at a swift pace along the Via de Bardi toward the Ponte Vecchio. She would go through the heart of the city; it was the most direct road, and, besides, in the great Piazza there was a chance of encountering her husband, who, by some possibility to which she still clung, might satisfy her of the Frate's safety, and leave no need for her to go to San Marco. When she arrived in front of the Palazza Vecchio, she looked eagerly into the pillared court; then her eyes swept the Piazza; but the well-known figure, once painted in her heart by young love, and now branded there by eating pain, was nowhere to be seen. She hurried straight on to the Piazza del Duomo. It was already full of movement: there were worshipers passing up and down the marble steps, there were men pausing for chat, and there were market-people carrying their burdens. Between those moving figures Romola caught a glimpse of her husband. On his way from San Marco he had turned into Nello's shop, and was now leaning against the door-post. As Romola approached she could see that he was standing and talking, with the easiest air in the world, holding his cap in his hand, and shaking back his freshly-combed hair. The contrast of this ease with the bitter anxieties he had created convulsed her with indignation: the new vision of his hardness heightened her dread. She recognized Cronaca and two other frequenters of San Marco standing near her husband. It flashed through her mind—"I will compel him to speak before those men." And her light step brought her close upon him before he had time to move, while Cronaca was saying, "Here comes Madonna Romola."

A slight shock passed through Tito's frame as he felt himself face to face with his wife. She was haggard with her anxious watching, but there was a flash of something else than anxiety in her eyes as she said—

"Is the Frate gone beyond the gates?"

"No," said Tito, feeling completely helpless before this woman, and needing all the self-command he possessed to preserve a countenance in which there should seem to be nothing stronger than surprise.

"And you are certain that he is not going?" she insisted.

"I am certain that he is not going."

"That is enough," said Romola, and she turned up the steps, to take refuge in the Duomo, till she could recover from her agitation.

Tito never had a feeling so near hatred as that with which his eyes followed Romola retreating up the steps.

There were present not only genuine followers of the Frate, but Ser Ceccone, the notary, who at that time, like Tito himself, was secretly an agent of the Mediceans.

Ser Francesco di Ser Barone, more briefly known to infamy as Ser Ceccone, was not learned, not handsome, not successful, and the reverse of generous. He was a traitor without a charm. It followed that he was not fond of Tito Melema.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

COUNTER-CHECK.

It was late in the afternoon when Tito returned home. Romola, seated opposite the cabinet in her narrow room, copying documents, was about to desist from her work because the light was getting dim, when her husband entered. He had come straight to this room to seek her, with a thoroughly defined intention, and there was something new to Romola in his manner and expression as he looked at her silently on entering, and, without taking off his cap and mantle, leaned one elbow on the cabinet, and stood directly in front of her.

Romola, fully assured during the day of the Frate's safety, was feeling the reaction of some penitence for the access of distrust and indignation which had impelled her to address her husband publicly on a matter that she knew he wished to be private. She told herself that she had probably been wrong. The scheming duplicity which she had heard even her godfather allude to as inseparable from party tactics might be sufficient to account for the connection with Spini, without the supposition that Tito had ever meant to further the plot. She wanted to atone for her impetuosity by confessing that she had been too hasty, and for some hours her mind had been dwelling on the possibility that this confession of hers might lead to other frank words breaking the two years' silence of their hearts. The silence had been so complete, that Tito was ignorant of her having fled from him and come back again; they had never approached an avowal of that past

which, both in its young love and in the shock that shattered the love, lay locked away from them like a banquet-room where death had once broken the feast.

She looked up at him with that submission in her glance which belonged to her state of self-reproof; but the subtle change in his face and manner arrested her speech. For a few moments they remained silent, looking at each other.

Tito himself felt that a crisis was come in his married life. The husband's determination to mastery, which lay deep below all blandness and beseechingness, had risen permanently to the surface now, and seemed to alter his face, as a face is altered by a hidden muscular tension with which a man is secretly throttling or stamping out the life from something feeble, yet dangerous.

"Romola," he began, in the cool liquid tone that made her shiver, "it is time that we should understand each other." He paused.

"That is what I most desire, Tito," she said, faintly. Her sweet pale face, with all its anger gone and nothing but the timidity of self-doubt in it, seemed to give a marked predominance to her husband's dark strength.

"You took a step this morning," Tito went on, "which you must now yourself perceive to have been useless—which exposed you to remark and may involve me in serious practical difficulties."

"I acknowledge that I was too hasty; I am sorry for any injustice I may have done you." Romola spoke these words in a fuller and firmer tone; Tito, she hoped, would look less hard when she had expressed her regret, and then she could say other things.

"I wish you once for all to understand," he said, without any change of voice, "that such collisions are incompatible with our position as husband and wife. I wish you to reflect on the mode in which you were led to that step, that the process may not be repeated."

"That depends chiefly on you, Tito," said Romola, taking fire slightly. It was not at all what she had thought of saying, but we see a very little way before us in mutual speech.

"You would say, I suppose," answered Tito, "that nothing is to occur in future which can excite your unreasonable suspicions. You were frank enough to say last night that you have no belief in me. I am not surprised at any exaggerated conclusion you may draw from slight

premises, but I wish to point out to you what is likely to be the fruit of your making such exaggerated conclusions a ground for interfering in affairs of which you are ignorant. Your attention is thoroughly awake to what I am saying?"

He paused for a reply.

"Yes," said Romola, flushing in irrepressible resentment at this cold tone of superiority.

"Well, then, it may possibly not be very long before some other chance words or incidents set your imagination at work devising crimes for me, and you may perhaps rush to the Palazzo Vecchio to alarm the Signoria and set the city in an uproar. Shall I tell you what may be the result? Not simply the disgrace of your husband, to which you look forward with so much courage, but the arrest and ruin of many among the chief men in Florence, including Messer Bernardo del Nero."

Tito had meditated a decisive move, and he had made it. The flush died out of Romola's face, and her very lips were pale—an unusual effect with her, for she was little subject to fear. Tito perceived his success.

"You would perhaps flatter yourself," he went on, "that you were performing a heroic deed of deliverance; you might as well try to turn locks with fine words as apply such notions to the politics of Florence. The question now is, not whether you can have any belief in me, but whether, now you have been warned, you will dare to rush, like a blind man with a torch in his hand, amongst intricate affairs of which you know nothing."

Romola felt as if her mind were held in a vice by Tito's: the possibilities he had indicated were rising before her with terrible clearness.

"I am too rash," she said. "I will try not to be rash."

"Remember," said Tito, with unsparing insistence, "that your act of distrust toward me this morning might, for aught you knew, have had more fatal effects than that sacrifice of your husband which you have learned to contemplate without flinching."

"Tito, it is not so," Romola burst forth in a pleading tone, rising and going nearer to him, with a desperate resolution to speak out. "It is false that I would willingly sacrifice you. It has been the greatest effort of my life to cling to you. I went away in my anger two years ago, and I came back again because I was more bound to you than to anything else on earth. But it is useless.

You shut me out from your mind. You affect to think of me as a being too unreasonable to share in the knowledge of your affairs. You will be open with me about nothing."

She looked like his good angel pleading with him, as she bent her face toward him with dilated eyes, and laid her hand upon his arm. But Romola's touch and glance no longer stirred any fibre of tenderness in her husband. The good-humored, tolerant Tito, incapable of hatred, incapable almost of impatience, disposed always to be gentle toward the rest of the world, felt himself becoming strangely hard toward this wife, whose presence had once been the strongest influence he had known. With all his softness of disposition, he had a masculine effectiveness of intellect and purpose which, like sharpness of edge, is itself an energy, working its way without any strong momentum. Romola had an energy of her own which thwarted his, and no man, who is not exceptionally feeble, will endure being thwarted by his wife. Marriage must be a relation either of sympathy or of conquest.

No emotion darted across his face as he heard Romola for the first time speak of having gone away from him. His lips only looked a little harder as he smiled slightly and said—

"My Romola, when certain conditions are ascertained, we must make up our minds to them. No amount of wishing will fill the Arno, as your people say, or turn a plum into an orange. I have not observed even that prayers have much efficacy that way. You are so constituted as to have certain strong impressions inaccessible to reason: I cannot share those impressions, and you have withdrawn all trust from me in consequence. You have changed toward me; it has followed that I have changed toward you. It is useless to take any retrospect. We have simply to adapt ourselves to altered conditions."

"Tito, it would not be useless for us to speak openly," said Romola, with a sort of exasperation that comes from using living muscle against some lifeless insurmountable resistance. "It was the sense of deception in you that changed me, and that has kept us apart. And it is not true that I changed first. You changed toward me the night you first wore that chain-armor. You had some secret from me—it was about that old man—and I saw him again yesterday. Tito," she went on, in a tone of agonized entreaty, "if you would once tell me everything,

let it be what it may—I would not mind pain—that there might be no wall between us! Is it not possible that we could begin a new life?”

This time there was a flash of emotion across Tito's face. He stood perfectly still; but the flash seemed to have whitened him. He took no notice of Romola's appeal, but after a moment's pause, said quietly—

“Your impetuosity about trifles, Romola, has a freezing influence that would cool the baths of Nero.” At these cutting words, Romola shrank and drew herself up into her usual self-sustained attitude. Tito went on. “If by ‘that old man’ you mean the mad Jacopo di Nola who attempted my life and made a strange accusation against me, of which I told you nothing because it would have alarmed you to no purpose, he, poor wretch, has died in prison. I saw his name in the list of dead.”

“I know nothing about his accusation,” said Romola. “But I know he is the man whom I saw with the rope round his neck in the Duomo—the man whose portrait Piero di Cosimo painted, grasping your arm as he saw him grasp it the day the French entered, the day you first wore the armor.”

“And where is he now, pray?” said Tito, still pale, but governing himself.

“He was lying lifeless in the street from starvation,” said Romola. “I revived him with bread and wine. I brought him to our door, but he refused to come in. Then I gave him some money, and he went away without telling me anything. But he had found out that I was your wife. Who is he?”

“A man, half mad, half imbecile, who was once my father's servant in Greece, and who has a rancorous hatred toward me because I got him dismissed for theft. Now you have the whole mystery, and the further satisfaction of knowing that I am again in danger of assassination. The fact of my wearing the armor, about which you seem to have thought so much, must have led you to infer that I was in danger from this man. Was that the reason you chose to cultivate his acquaintance and invite him into the house?”

Romola was mute. To speak was only like rushing with bare breast against a shield.

Tito moved from his leaning posture, slowly took off his cap and mantle, and pushed back his hair. He was collecting himself for some final words. And Romola

stood upright looking at him as she might have looked at some on-coming deadly force, to be met only by silent endurance.

"We need not refer to these matters again, Romola," he said, precisely in the same tone as that in which he had spoken at first. "It is enough if you will remember that the next time your generous ardor leads you to interfere in political affairs, you are likely, not to save any one from danger, but to be raising scaffolds and setting houses on fire. You are not yet a sufficiently ardent Piagnone to believe that Messer Bernardo del Nero is the prince of darkness, and Messer Francesco Valori the archangel Michael. I think I need demand no promise from you?"

"I have understood you too well, Tito."

"It is enough," he said, leaving the room.

Romola turned round with despair in her face and sank into her seat. "O God, I have tried—I cannot help it. We shall always be divided." Those words passed silently through her mind. "Unless," she said aloud, as if some sudden vision had startled her into speech—"unless misery should come and join us!"

Tito, too, had a new thought in his mind after he had closed the door behind him. With the project of leaving Florence as soon as his life there had become a high enough stepping-stone to a life elsewhere, perhaps at Rome or Milan, there was now for the first time associated a desire to be free from Romola, and to leave her behind him. She had ceased to belong to the desirable furniture of his life: there was no possibility of an easy relation between them without genuineness on his part. Genuineness implied confession of the past, and confession involved a change of purpose. But Tito had as little bent that way as a leopard has to lap milk when its teeth are grown. From all relations that were not easy and agreeable, we know that Tito shrank: why should he cling to them?

And Romola had made his relations difficult with others besides herself. He had had a troublesome interview with Dolfo Spini, who had come back in a rage after an ineffectual soaking with rain and long waiting in ambush, and that scene between Romola and himself at Nello's door, once reported in Spini's ear, might be a seed of something more unmanageable than suspicion. But now, at least, he believed that he had mastered Romola by a terror which appealed to the strongest forces of her nature. He had alarmed her affection and her conscience by the shadowy

image of consequences; he had arrested her intellect by hanging before it the idea of a hopeless complexity in affairs which defied any moral judgment.

Yet Tito was not at ease. The world was not yet quite cushioned with velvet, and, if it had been, he could not have abandoned himself to that softness with thorough enjoyment; for before he went out again this evening he put on his coat of chain-armor.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE PYRAMID OF VANITIES.

THE wintry days passed for Romola as the white ships pass one who is standing lonely on the shore — passing in silence and sameness, yet each bearing a hidden burden of coming change. Tito's hint had mingled so much dread with her interest in the progress of public affairs that she had begun to court ignorance rather than knowledge. The threatening German Emperor was gone again; and, in other ways besides, the position of Florence was alleviated; but so much distress remained that Romola's active duties were hardly diminished, and in these, as usual, her mind found a refuge from its doubt.

She dared not rejoice that the relief which had come in extremity and had appeared to justify the policy of the Frate's party, was making that party so triumphant that Francesco Valori, hot-tempered chieftain of the Piagnoni, had been elected Gonfaloniere at the beginning of the year, and was making haste to have as much of his own liberal way as possible during his two months of power. That seemed for the moment like a strengthening of the party most attached to freedom, and a reinforcement of protection to Savonarola; but Romola was now alive to every suggestion likely to deepen her foreboding, that whatever the present might be, it was only an unconscious brooding over the mixed germs of Change, which might any day become tragic. And already by Carnival time, a little after mid-February, her presentiment was confirmed by the signs of a very decided change: the Mediceans had ceased to be passive, and were openly exerting themselves to procure the election of Bernardo del Nero as the new Gonfaloniere.

On the last day of the Carnival, between ten and eleven in the morning, Romola walked out, according to promise, toward the Corso degli Albizzi, to fetch her cousin Brigida, that they might both be ready to start from the Via de Bardi early in the afternoon, and take their places at a window which Tito had had reserved for them in the Piazza della Signoria, where there was to be a scene of so new and striking a sort, that all Florentine eyes must desire to see it. For the Piagnoni were having their own way thoroughly about the mode of keeping the Carnival. In vain Dolfo Spini and his companions had struggled to get up the dear old masks and practical jokes, well spiced with indecency. Such things were not to be in a city where Christ had been declared king.

Romola set out in that languid state of mind with which every one enters on a long day of sight-seeing, purely for the sake of gratifying a child, or some dear childish friend. The day was certainly an epoch in carnival keeping; but this phase of reform had not touched her enthusiasm: and she did not know that it was an epoch in her own life when *another* lot would begin to be no longer secretly but visibly entwined with her own.

She chose to go through the great Piazza that she might take a first survey of the unparalleled sight there while she was still alone. Entering it from the south, she saw something monstrous and many-colored in the shape of a pyramid, or, rather, like a huge fir tree, sixty feet high, with shelves on the branches, widening and widening toward the base till they reached a circumference of eighty yards. The Piazza was full of life: slight young figures, in white garments, with olive wreaths on their heads, were moving to and fro about the base of the pyramidal tree, carrying baskets full of bright colored things; and maturer forms, some in the monastic frock, some in the loose tunics and dark red caps of artists, were helping and examining or else retreating to various points in the distance to survey the wondrous whole: while a considerable group, amongst whom Romola recognized Piero di Cosimo, standing on the marble steps of Orgagna's Loggia, seemed to be keeping aloof in discontent and scorn.

Approaching nearer, she paused to look at the multifarious objects ranged in gradation from the base to the summit of the pyramid. There were tapestries and brocades of immodest design, pictures and sculptures held too likely to incite to vice; there were boards and tables

for all sorts of games, playing cards, along with the blocks for printing them, dice, and other apparatus for gambling; there were worldly music books, and musical instruments in all the pretty varieties of lute, drum, cymbal and trumpet; there were masks and masquerading dresses used in the old Carnival shows; there were handsome copies of Ovid, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Pulci, and other books of a vain or impure sort; there were all the implements of feminine vanity—rouge-pots, false hair, mirrors, perfumes, powders and transparent veils intended to provoke inquisitive glances: lastly, at the very summit, there was the unflattering effigy of a probably mythical Venetian merchant, who was understood to have offered a heavy sum for this collection of marketable abominations, and, soaring above him in surpassing ugliness, the symbolic figure of the old debauched Carnival.

This was the preparation for a new sort of bonfire—the Burning of Vanities. Hidden in the interior of the pyramid was a plentiful store of dry fuel and gunpowder; and on this last day of the festival, at evening, the pile of vanities was to be set ablaze to the sound of trumpets, and the ugly old Carnival was to tumble into the flames amid the songs of reforming triumph.

This crowning act of the new festivities could hardly have been prepared but for a peculiar organization which had been started by Savonarola two years before. The mass of the Florentine boyhood and youth was no longer left to its own genial promptings toward street mischief and crude dissoluteness. Under the training of Fra Domenico, a sort of lieutenant to Savonarola, lads and striplings, the hope of Florence, were to have none but pure words on their lips, were to have a zeal for Unseen Good that should put to shame the lukewarmness of their elders, and were to know no pleasures save of an angelic sort—singing divine praises and walking in white robes. It was for them that the ranges of seats had been raised high against the walls of the Duomo; and they had been used to hear Savonarola appeal to them as the future glory of a city specially appointed to do the work of God.

These fresh-cheeked troops were the chief agents in the regenerated merriment of the new Carnival, which was a sort of sacred parody of the old. Had there been bonfires in the old time? There was to be a bonfire now, consuming impurity from off the earth. Had there been symbolic processions? There were to be processions now,

but the symbols were to be white robes and red crosses and olive wreaths—emblems of peace and innocent gladness—and the banners and images held aloft were to tell the triumphs of goodness. Had there been dancing in a ring under the open sky of the Piazza, to the sound of choral voices chanting loose songs? There was to be dancing in a ring now, but dancing of monks and laity in fraternal love and divine joy, and the music was to be the music of hymns. As for the collections from street passengers, they were to be greater than ever—not for gross and superfluous suppers, but—for the benefit of the hungry and needy; and, besides, there was the collecting of the *Anathema*, or the Vanities to be laid on the great pyramidal bonfire.

Troops of young inquisitors went from house to house on this exciting business of asking that the *Anathema* should be given up to them. Perhaps, after the more avowed vanities had been surrendered, Madonna, at the head of the household, had still certain little reddened balls brought from the Levant, intended to produce on a sallow cheek a sudden bloom of the most ingenuous falsity? If so, let her bring them down and cast them into the basket of doom. Or, perhaps, she had ringlets and coils of “dead hair”?—if so, let her bring them to the street-door, not on her head, but in her hands, and publicly renounce the *Anathema* which hid the respectable signs of age under a ghastly mockery of youth. And, in reward, she would hear fresh young voices pronounce a blessing on her and her house.

The beardless inquisitors, organized into little regiments, doubtless took to their work very willingly. To coerce people by shame, or other spiritual pelting, into the giving up of things it will probably vex them to part with, is a form of piety to which the boyish mind is most readily converted; and if some obstinately wicked men got enraged and threatened the whip or the cudgel, this also was exciting. Savonarola himself evidently felt about the training of these boys the difficulty weighing on all minds with noble yearnings toward great ends, yet with that imperfect perception of means which forces a resort to some supernatural constraining influence as the only sure hope. The Florentine youth had had very evil habits and foul tongues: it seemed at first an unmixed blessing when they were got to shout “*Viva Gesù!*” But Savonarola was forced at last to say from the pulpit, “There is a little too much shouting of ‘*Viva*

Gesù! This constant utterance of sacred words brings them into contempt. Let me have no more of that shouting till the next Festa."

Nevertheless, as the long stream of white-robed youthfulness, with its little red crosses and olive wreaths, had gone to the Duomo at dawn this morning to receive the communion from the hands of Savonarola, it was a sight of beauty; and, doubtless, many of those young souls were laying up memories of hope and awe that might save them from ever resting in a merely vulgar view of their work as men and citizens. There is no kind of conscious obedience that is not an advance on lawlessness, and these boys became the generation of men who fought greatly and endured greatly in the last struggle of their Republic. Now, in the intermediate hours between the early communion and dinner-time, they were making their last perambulations to collect alms and vanities, and this was why Romola saw the slim white figures moving to and fro about the base of the great pyramid.

"What think you of this folly, Madonna Romola?" said a brusque voice close to her ear. "Your Piagnoni will make *l'inferno* a pleasant prospect to us, if they are to carry things their own way on earth. It's enough to fetch a cudgel over the mountains to see painters, like Lorenzo di Credi and young Baccio there, helping to burn color out of life in this fashion."

"My good Piero," said Romola, looking up and smiling at the grim man, "even you must be glad to see some of these things burned. Look at those gewgaws and wigs and rouge-pots: I have heard you talk as indignantly against those things as Fra Girolamo himself."

"What then?" said Piero, turning round on her sharply. "I never said a woman should make a black patch of herself against the background. Va! Madonna Antigone, it's a shame for a woman with your hair and shoulders to run into such nonsense—leave it to women who are not worth painting. What! the most holy Virgin herself has always been dressed well; that's the doctrine of the church:—talk of heresy, indeed! And I should like to know what the excellent Messer Bardo would have said to the burning of the divine poets by these Frati, who are no better an imitation of men than if they were onions with the bulbs uppermost. Look at that Petrarca sticking up beside a rouge-pot: do the idiots pretend that the heavenly Laura was a painted harridan? And Boccaccio, now: do

you mean to say, Madonna Romola—you who are fit to be a model for wise Saint Catherine of Egypt—do you mean to say you have never read the stories of the immortal Messer Giovanni?"

"It is true I have read them, Piero," said Romola. "Some of them a great many times over, when I was a little girl. I used to get the book down when my father was asleep, so that I could read to myself."

"*Ebbene?*" said Piero, in a fiercely challenging tone.

"There are some things in them I do not want ever to forget," said Romola; "but you must confess, Piero, that a great many of these stories are only about low deceit for the lowest ends. Men do not want books to make them think lightly of vice, as if life were a vulgar joke. And I cannot blame Fra Girolamo for teaching that we owe our time to something better."

"Yes, yes, it's very well to say so now you've read them," said Piero, bitterly, turning on his heel and walking away from her.

Romola, too, walked on, smiling at Piero's innuendo, with a sort of tenderness toward the old painter's anger, because she knew that her father would have felt something like it. For herself, she was conscious of no inward collision with the strict and sombre view of pleasure which tended to repress poetry in the attempt to repress vice. Sorrow and joy have each their peculiar narrowness; and a religious enthusiasm like Savonarola's which ultimately blesses mankind by giving the soul a strong propulsion toward sympathy with pain, indignation against wrong, and the subjugation of sensual desire, must always incur the reproach of a great negation. Romola's life had given her an affinity for sadness which inevitably made her unjust toward merriment. That subtle result of culture which we call taste was subdued by the need for deeper motive; just as the nicer demands of the palate are annihilated by urgent hunger. Moving habitually amongst scenes of suffering, and carrying woman's heaviest disappointment in her heart, the severity which allied itself with self-renouncing beneficent strength had no dissonance for her.

CHAPTER L.

TESSA ABROAD AND AT HOME.

ANOTHER figure easily recognized by us—a figure not clad in black, but in the old red, green, and white—was approaching the Piazza that morning to see the Carnival. She came from an opposite point, for Tessa no longer lived on the hill of San Giorgio. After what had happened there with Baldassarre, Tito had thought it best for that and other reasons to find her a new home, but still in a quiet airy quarter, in a house bordering on the wide garden grounds north of the Porta Santa Croce.

Tessa was not come out sight-seeing without special leave. Tito had been with her the evening before, and she had kept back the entreaty which she felt to be swelling her heart and throat until she saw him in a state of radiant ease, with one arm around the sturdy Lillo, and the other resting gently on her own shoulder as she tried to make the tiny Ninna steady on her legs. She was sure then that the weariness with which he had come in and flung himself into his chair had quite melted away from his brow and lips. Tessa had not been slow at learning a few small stratagems by which she might avoid vexing Naldo and yet have a little of her own way. She could read nothing else, but she had learned to read a good deal in her husband's face.

And certainly the charm of that bright, gentle-humored Tito who woke up under the Loggia de Cerchi on a Lenten morning five years before, not having yet given any hostages to deceit, never returned so nearly as in the person of Naldo, seated in that straight-backed, carved arm-chair which he had provided for his comfort when he came to see Tessa and the children. Tito himself was surprised at the growing sense of relief which he felt in these moments. No guile was needed toward Tessa: she was too ignorant and too innocent to suspect him of anything. And the little voices calling him "Babbo" were very sweet in his ears for the short while that he heard them. When he thought of leaving Florence, he never thought of leaving Tessa and the little ones behind. He was very fond of these round-cheeked, wide-eyed human things that clung about him and knew no evil of him. And wherever affection can spring, it is like the green

leaf and the blossom—pure, and breathing purity, whatever soil it may grow in. Poor Romola, with all her self-sacrificing effort, was really helping to harden Tito's nature by chilling it with a positive dislike which had beforehand seemed impossible in him: but Tessa kept open the fountains of kindness.

"Ninna is very good without me now," began Tessa, feeling her request rising very high in her throat, and letting Ninna seat herself on the floor. "I can leave her with Monna Lisa any time, and if she is in the cradle and cries, Lillo is as sensible as can be—he goes and thumps Monna Lisa."

Lillo, whose great dark eyes looked all the darker because his curls were of a light brown like his mother's, jumped off Babbo's knee, and went forthwith to attest his intelligence by thumping Monna Lisa, who was shaking her head slowly over her spinning at the other end of the room.

"A wonderful boy!" said Tito, laughing.

"Isn't he?" said Tessa, eagerly, getting a little closer to him; "and I might go and see the Carnival to-morrow, just for an hour or two, mightn't I?"

"Oh, you wicked pigeon!" said Tito, pinching her cheek; "those are your longings, are they? What have you to do with carnivals now you are an old woman with two children?"

"But old women like to see things," said Tessa, her lower lip hanging a little. "Monna Lisa said she should like to go, only she's so deaf she can't hear what is behind her, and she thinks we couldn't take care of both the children."

"No, indeed, Tessa," said Tito, looking rather grave, "you must not think of taking the children into the crowded streets, else I shall be angry."

"But I have never been into the Piazza without leave," said Tessa, in a frightened, pleading tone, "since the Holy Saturday, and I think Nofri is dead, for you know the poor *madre* died; and I shall never forget the Carnival I saw once; it was so pretty—all roses and a king and queen under them—and singing. I liked it better than the San Giovanni."

"But there's nothing like that now, my Tessa. They are going to make a bonfire in the Piazza—that's all. But I cannot let you go out by yourself in the evening."

"Oh, no, no! I don't want to go in the evening. I only

want to go and see the procession by daylight. There *will* be a procession—is it not true?”

“Yes, after a sort,” said Tito, “as lively as a flight of cranes. You must not expect roses and glittering kings and queens, my Tessa. However I suppose any string of people to be called a procession will please your blue eyes. And there’s a thing they have raised in the Piazza de Signori for the bonfire. You may like to see that. But come home early, and look like a grave little old woman; and if you see any men with feathers and swords, keep out of their way: they are very fierce, and like to cut old women’s heads off.”

“Santa Madonna! where do they come from? Ah! you are laughing; it is not so bad. But I will keep away from them. Only,” Tessa went on in a whisper, putting her lips near Naldo’s ear, “if I might take Lillo with me! He is very sensible.”

“But who will thump Monna Lisa then, if she doesn’t hear?” said Tito, finding it difficult not to laugh, but thinking it necessary to look serious. “No, Tessa, you could not take care of Lillo if you got into a crowd, and he’s too heavy for you to carry him.”

“It is true,” said Tessa, rather sadly, “and he likes to run away. I forgot that. Then I will go alone. But now look at Ninna—you have not looked at her enough.”

Ninna was a blue-eyed thing, at the tottering, tumbling age—a fair solid, which, like a loaded die, found its base with a constancy that warranted prediction. Tessa went to snatch her up, and when Babbo was paying due attention to the recent teeth and other marvels, she said, in a whisper, “And shall I buy some confetti for the children?”

Tito drew some small coins from his scarsella, and poured them into her palm.

“That will buy no end,” said Tessa, delighted at this abundance. “I shall not mind going without Lillo so much, if I bring him something.”

So Tessa set out in the morning toward the great Piazza where the bonfire was to be. She did not think the February breeze cold enough to demand further covering than her green woolen dress. A mantle would have been oppressive, for it would have hidden a new necklace and a new clasp, mounted with silver, the only ornamental presents Tito had ever made her. Tessa did not think at all of showing her figure, for no one had ever told her it was pretty; but she was quite sure that her necklace and

clasp were of the prettiest sort ever worn by the richest contadina, and she arranged her white hood over her head so that the front of her necklace might be well displayed. These ornaments, she considered, must inspire respect for her as the wife of some one who could afford to buy them.

She tripped along very cheerily in the February sunshine, thinking much of the purchases for the little ones, with which she was to fill her small basket, and not thinking at all of any one who might be observing her. Yet her descent from her upper story into the street had been watched, and she was being kept in sight as she walked by a person who had often waited in vain to see if it were not Tessa who lived in that house to which he had more than once dogged Tito. Baldassarre was carrying a package of yarn: he was constantly employed in that way, as a means of earning his scanty bread, and keeping the sacred fire of vengeance alive; and he had come out of his way this morning, as he had often done before, that he might pass by the house to which he had followed Tito in the evening. His long imprisonment had so intensified his timid suspicion and his belief in some diabolic fortune favoring Tito, that he had not dared to pursue him, except under cover of a crowd or of the darkness; he felt, with instinctive horror, that if Tito's eyes fell upon him, he should again be held up to obloquy, again be dragged away; his weapon would be taken from him, and he should be cast helpless into a prison-cell. His fierce purpose had become as stealthy as a serpent's, which depends for its prey on one dart of the fang. Justice was weak and unfriended; and he could not hear again the voice that pealed the promise of vengeance in the Duomo; he had been there again and again, but that voice, too, had apparently been stifled by cunning strong-armed wickedness. For a long while Baldassarre's ruling thought was to ascertain whether Tito still wore the armor, for now at last his fainting hope would have been contented with a successful stab on this side the grave; but he would never risk his precious knife again. It was a weary time he had had to wait for the chance of answering this question by touching Tito's back in the press of the street. Since then, the knowledge that the sharp steel was useless, and that he had no hope but in some new device, had fallen with leaden weight on his enfeebled mind. A dim vision of winning one of those two wives to aid him came before him continually, and continually slid away. The wife who had lived on the

hill was no longer there. If he could find her again, he might grasp some thread of a project, and work his way to more clearness.

And this morning he had succeeded. He was quite certain now where this wife lived, and as he walked, bent a little under his burden of yarn, yet keeping the green and white figure in sight, his mind was dwelling upon her and her circumstances as feeble eyes dwell on lines and colors, trying to interpret them into consistent significance.

Tessa had to pass through various long streets without seeing any other sign of the Carnival than unusual groups of the country people in their best garments, and that disposition in everybody to chat and loiter which marks the early hours of a holiday, before the spectacle has begun. Presently, in her disappointed search for remarkable objects, her eyes fell on a man with a peddler's basket before him, who seemed to be selling nothing but little red crosses to all the passengers. A little red cross would be pretty to hang up over her bed; it would also help to keep off harm, and would perhaps make Ninna stronger. Tessa went to the other side of the street that she might ask the peddler the price of the crosses, fearing that they would cost a little too much for her to spare from her purchase of sweets. The peddler's back had been turned toward her hitherto, but when she came near him she recognized an old acquaintance of the Mercato, Bratti Ferravecchi, and, accustomed to feel that she was to avoid old acquaintances, she turned away again and passed to the other side of the street. But Bratti's eye was too well practiced in looking out at the corner after possible customers, for her movement to have escaped him, and she was presently arrested by a tap on the arm from one of the red crosses.

"Young woman," said Bratti, as she unwillingly turned her head, "you come from some castello a good way off, it seems to me, else you'd never think of walking about this blessed Carnival, without a red cross in your hand. Santa Madonna! Four white quattrini is a small price to pay for your soul—prices rise in purgatory, let me tell you."

"Oh, I should like one," said Tessa, hastily, "but I couldn't spare four white quattrini."

Bratti had at first regarded Tessa too abstractedly as a mere customer to look at her with any scrutiny, but when she began to speak he exclaimed, "By the head of San

Giovanni, it must be the little Tessa, and looking as fresh as a ripe apple! What! you've done none the worse, then, for running away from father Nofri? You were in the right of it, for he goes on crutches now, and a crabbed fellow with crutches is dangerous; he can reach across the house and beat a woman as he sits."

"I'm married," said Tessa, rather demurely, remembering Naldo's command that she should behave with gravity; "and my husband takes great care of me."

"Ah, then, you've fallen on your feet! Nofri said you were good-for-nothing vermin; but what then? An ass may bray a good while before he shakes the stars down. I always said you did well to run away, and it isn't often Bratti's in the wrong. Well, and so you've got a husband and plenty of money? Then you'll never think much of giving four white quattrini for a red cross. I get no profit; but what with the famine and the new religion, all other merchandise is gone down. You live in the country where the chestnuts are plenty, eh? You've never wanted for polenta, I can see."

"No, I've never wanted anything," said Tessa, still on her guard.

"Then you can afford to buy a cross. I got a Padre to bless them, and you get blessing and all for four quattrini. It isn't for the profit; I hardly get a danaro by the whole lot. But then they're holy wares, and it's getting harder and harder work to see your way to Paradise; the very Carnival is like Holy Week, and the least you can do to keep the Devil from getting the upper hand is to buy a cross. God guard you! think what the Devil's tooth is! You've seen him biting the man in San Giovanni, I should hope?"

Tessa felt much teased and frightened. "Oh, Bratti," she said, with a discomposed face. "I want to buy a great many confetti: I've got little Lillo and Ninna at home. And nice-colored sweet things cost a great deal. And they will not like the cross so well, though I know it would be good to have it."

"Come, then," said Bratti, fond of laying up a store of merits by imagining possible extortions and then heroically renouncing them, "since you're an old acquaintance, you shall have it for two quattrini. It's making you a present of the cross, to say nothing of the blessing."

Tessa was reaching out her two quattrini with trembling

hesitation, when Bratti said abruptly, "Stop a bit! Where do you live?"

"Oh, a long way off," she answered, almost automatically, being preoccupied with her quattrini; "beyond San Ambrogio, in the Via Piccola, at the top of the house where the wood is stacked below."

"Very good," said Bratti, in a patronizing tone; "then I'll let you have the cross on trust, and call for the money. So you live inside the gates? Well, I shall be passing."

"No, no!" said Tessa, frightened lest Naldo should be angry at this revival of an old acquaintance. "I can spare the money. Take it now."

"No," said Bratti, resolutely; "I'm not a hard-hearted peddler. I'll call and see if you've got any rags, and you shall make a bargain. See, here's the cross: and there's Pippo's shop not far behind you: you can go and fill your basket, and I must go and get mine empty. *Addio, piccina.*"

Bratti went on his way, and Tessa, stimulated to change her money into confetti before further accident, went into Pippo's shop, a little fluttered by the thought that she had let Bratti know more about her than her husband would approve. There were certainly more dangers in coming to see the Carnival than in staying at home; and she would have felt this more strongly if she had known that the wicked old man, who had wanted to kill her husband on the hill, was still keeping her in sight. But she had not noticed the man with the burden on his back.

The consciousness of having a small basketful of things to make the children glad, dispersed her anxiety, and as she entered the Via de Libraj her face had its usual expression of child-like content. And now she thought there was really a procession coming, for she saw white robes and a banner, and her heart began to palpitate with expectation. She stood a little aside, but in that narrow street there was the pleasure of being obliged to look very close. The banner was pretty: it was the Holy Mother with the Babe, whose love for her Tessa had believed in more and more since she had had her babies; and the figures in white had not only green wreaths on their heads, but little red crosses by their side, which caused her some satisfaction that she also had her red cross. Certainly, they looked as beautiful as the angels on the clouds, and to Tessa's mind they too had a background of cloud, like everything else that came to her in life. How and whence did they come?

She did not mind much about knowing. But one thing surprised her as newer than wreaths and crosses; it was that some of the white figures carried baskets between them. What could the baskets be for?

But now they were very near, and, to her astonishment, they wheeled aside and came straight up to her. She trembled as she would have done if St. Michael in the picture had shaken his head at her, and was conscious of nothing but terrified wonder till she saw close to her a round boyish face, lower than her own, and heard a treble voice saying, "Sister, you carry the Anathema about you. Yield it up to the blessed Gesù, and He will adorn you with the gems of His grace."

Tessa was only more frightened, understanding nothing. Her first conjecture settled on her basket of sweets. They wanted that, these alarming angels. Oh, dear, dear! She looked down at it.

"No, sister," said a taller youth, pointing to her necklace and the clasp of her belt, "it is those vanities that are the Anathema. Take off that necklace and unclasp that belt, that they may be burned in the holy Bonfire of Vanities, and save *you* from burning."

"It is the truth, my sister," said a still taller youth, evidently the archangel of this band. "Listen to these voices speaking the divine message. You already carry a red cross: let that be your only adornment. Yield up your necklace and belt, and you shall obtain grace."

This was too much. Tessa, overcome with awe, dared not say "no," but she was equally unable to render up her beloved necklace and clasp. Her pouting lips were quivering, the tears rushed to her eyes, and a great drop fell. For a moment she ceased to see anything; she felt nothing but confused terror and misery. Suddenly a gentle hand was laid on her arm, and a soft, wonderful voice, as if the Holy Madonna were speaking, said, "Do not be afraid; no one shall harm you."

Tessa looked up and saw a lady in black, with a young, heavenly face and loving hazel eyes. She had never seen any one like this lady before, and under other circumstances might have had awestruck thoughts about her; but now everything else was overcome by the sense that loving protection was near her. The tears only fell the faster, relieving her swelling heart, as she looked up at the heavenly face, and, putting her hand to her necklace, said sobbingly—

"I can't give them to be burned. My husband—he bought them for me—and they are so pretty—and Ninna—oh, I wish I'd never come!"

"Do not ask her for them," said Romola, speaking to the white-robed boys in a tone of mild authority. "It answers no good end for people to give up such things against their will. That is not what Fra Girolamo approves: he would have such things given up freely."

Madonna Romola's word was not to be resisted, and the white train moved on. They even moved with haste, as if some new object had caught their eyes; and Tessa felt with bliss that they were gone, and that her necklace and clasp were still with her.

"Oh, I will go back to the house," she said, still agitated; "I will go nowhere else. But if I should meet them again, and you not be there?" she added, expecting everything from this heavenly lady.

"Stay a little," said Romola. "Come with me under this doorway, and we will hide the necklace and clasp, and then you will be in no danger."

She led Tessa under the archway, and said, "Now, can we find room for your necklace and belt in your basket? Ah! your basket is full of crisp things that will break: let us be careful; and lay the heavy necklace under them."

It was like a change in a dream to Tessa—the escape from nightmare into floating safety and joy—to find herself taken care of by this lady, so lovely, and powerful, and gentle. She let Romola unfasten her necklace and clasp, while she herself did nothing but look up at the face that bent over her.

"They are sweets for Lillo and Ninna," she said, as Romola carefully lifted up the light parcels in the basket, and placed the ornaments below them.

"Those are your children?" said Romola, smiling.

"And you would rather go home to them than see any more of the Carnival? Else you have not far to go to the Piazza de Signori, and there you would see the pile for the great bonfire."

"No, oh, no!" said Tessa, eagerly; "I shall never like bonfires again. I will go back."

"You live at some castello, doubtless," said Romola, not waiting for an answer. "Toward which gate do you go?"

"Toward Por' Santa Croce."

"Come, then," said Romola, taking her by the hand

and leading her to the corner of a street nearly opposite. "If you go down there," she said, pausing, "you will soon be in a straight road. And I must leave you now, because some one else expects me. You will not be frightened. Your pretty things are quite safe now. Addio."

"Addio, Madonna," said Tessa, almost in a whisper, not knowing what else would be right to say; and in an instant the heavenly lady was gone. Tessa turned to catch a last glimpse, but she only saw the tall gliding figure vanish round the projecting stonework. So she went on her way in wonder, longing to be once more safely housed with Monna Lisa, undesirous of carnivals forevermore.

Baldassarre had kept Tessa in sight till the moment of her parting with Romola: then he went away with his bundle of yarn. It seemed to him that he had discerned a clue which might guide him if he could only grasp the necessary details firmly enough. He had seen the two wives together, and the sight had brought to his conceptions that vividness which had been wanting before. His power of imagining facts needed to be reinforced continually by the senses. The tall wife was the noble and rightful wife; she had the blood in her that would be readily kindled to resentment; she would know what scholarship was, and how it might lie locked in by the obstructions of the stricken body, like a treasure buried by earthquake. She could believe him: she would be *inclined* to believe him, if he proved to her that her husband was unfaithful. Women cared about that: they would take vengeance for that. If this wife of Tito's loved him, she would have a sense of injury which Baldassarre's mind dwelt on with keen longing, as if it would be the strength of another Will added to his own, the strength of another mind to form devices.

Both these wives had been kind to Baldassarre, and their acts toward him, being bound up with the very image of them, had not vanished from his memory; yet the thought of their pain could not present itself to him as a check. To him it seemed that pain was the order of the world for all except the hard and base. If any were innocent, if any were noble, where could the utmost gladness lie for them? Where it lay for him—in unconquerable hatred and triumphant vengeance. But he must be cautious: he must watch this wife in the Via de Bardi, and learn more of her; for even here frustration was possible. There was no power for him now but in patience.

CHAPTER LI.

MONNA BRIGIDA'S CONVERSION.

WHEN Romola said that some one else expected her, she meant her cousin Brigida, but she was far from suspecting how much that good kinswoman was in need of her. Returning together toward the Piazza, they had descried the company of youths coming to a stand before Tessa, and when Romola, having approached near enough to see the simple little contadina's distress, said, "Wait for me a moment, cousin," Monna Brigida said hastily, "Ah, I will not go on: come for me to Boni's shop—I shall go back there."

The truth was, Monna Brigida had a consciousness on the one hand of certain "vanities" carried on her person, and on the other of a growing alarm lest the Piagnoni should be right in holding that rouge, and false hair, and pearl embroidery, endamaged the soul. Their serious view of things filled the air like an odor; nothing seemed to have exactly the same flavor as it used to have; and there was the dear child Romola, in her youth and beauty, leading a life that was uncomfortably suggestive of rigorous demands on woman. A widow at fifty-five whose satisfaction had been largely drawn from what she thinks of her own person, and what she believes others think of it, requires a great fund of imagination to keep her spirits buoyant. And Monna Brigida had begun to have frequent struggles at her toilet. If her soul would prosper better without them, was it really worth while to put on the rouge and the braids? But when she lifted up the hand-mirror and saw a sallow face with baggy cheeks, and crows'-feet that were not to be dissimulated by any simpering of the lips—when she parted her gray hair, and let it lie in simple Piagnone fashion round her face, her courage failed. Monna Berta would certainly burst out laughing at her, and call her an old hag, and as Monna Berta was really only fifty-two, she had a superiority which would make the observation cutting. Every woman who was not a Piagnone would give a shrug at the sight of her, and the men would accost her as if she were their grandmother. Whereas, at fifty-five a woman was not so very old—she only required making up a little. So

the rouge and the braids and the embroidered berretta went on again, and Monna Brigida was satisfied with the accustomed effect; as for her neck, if she covered it up, people might suppose it was too old to show, and, on the contrary, with the necklaces round it, it looked better than Monna Berta's. This very day, when she was preparing for the Piagnone Carnival, such a struggle had occurred, and the conflicting fears and longings which caused the struggle, caused her to turn back and seek refuge in the druggist's shop rather than encounter the collectors of the Anathema when Romola was not by her side. But Monna Brigida was not quite rapid enough in her retreat. She had been descried, even before she turned away, by the white-robed boys in the rear of those who wheeled round toward Tessa, and the willingness with which Tessa was given up was, perhaps, slightly due to the fact that part of the troop had already accosted a personage carrying more markedly upon her the dangerous weight of the Anathema. It happened that several of this troop were at the youngest age taken into peculiar training; and a small fellow of ten, his olive wreath resting above cherubic cheeks and wide brown eyes, his imagination really possessed with a hovering awe at existence as something in which great consequences impended on being good or bad, his longings nevertheless running in the direction of mastery and mischief, was the first to reach Monna Brigida and place himself across her path. She felt angry, and looked for an open door, but there was not one at hand, and by attempting to escape now, she would only make things worse. But it was not the cherubic-faced young one who first addressed her; it was a youth of fifteen, who held one handle of a wide basket.

"Venerable mother!" he began, "the blessed Jesus commands you to give up the Anathema which you carry upon you. That cap embroidered with pearls, those jewels that fasten up your false hair—let them be given up and sold for the poor; and cast the hair itself away from you, as a lie that is only fit for burning. Doubtless, too, you have other jewels under your silk mantle."

"Yes, lady," said the youth at the other handle, who had many of Fra Girolamo's phrases by heart, "they are too heavy for you: they are heavier than a millstone, and are weighting you for perdition. Will you adorn yourself with the hunger of the poor, and be proud to carry God's curse upon your head?"

"In truth you are old, buona madre," said the cherubic boy, in a sweet soprano. "You look very ugly with the red on your cheeks and that black glistening hair, and those fine things. It is only Satan who can like to see you. Your Angel is sorry. He wants you to rub away the red."

The little fellow snatched a soft silk scarf from the basket, and held it toward Monna Brigida, that she might use it as her guardian angel desired. Her anger and mortification were fast giving way to spiritual alarm. Monna Berta and that cloud of witnesses, highly-dressed society in general, were not looking at her, and she was surrounded by young monitors, whose white robes, and wreaths, and red crosses, and dreadful candor, had something awful in their unusualness. Her Franciscan confessor, Fra Cristoforo, of Santa Croce, was not at hand to reinforce her distrust of Dominican teaching, and she was helplessly possessed and shaken by a vague sense that a supreme warning was come to her. Unvisited by the least suggestion of any other course that was open to her, she took the scarf that was held out, and rubbed her cheeks, with trembling submissiveness.

"It is well, madonna," said the second youth. "It is a holy beginning. And when you have taken those vanities from your head, the dew of heavenly grace will descend on it." The infusion of mischief was getting stronger, and putting his hand to one of the jeweled pins that fastened her braids to the berretta, he drew it out. The heavy black plait fell down over Monna Brigida's face, and dragged the rest of the head-gear forward. It was a new reason for not hesitating: she put up her hands hastily, undid the other fastenings, and flung down into the basket of doom her beloved crimson velvet berretta, with all its unsurpassed embroidery of seed-pearls, and stood an unrouged woman, with gray hair pushed backward from a face where certain deep lines of age had triumphed over *embonpoint*.

But the berretta was not allowed to lie in the basket. With impish zeal the youngsters lifted it, and held it up pitilessly, with the false hair dangling.

"See, venerable mother," said the taller youth, "what ugly lies you have delivered yourself from! And now you look like the blessed Saint Anna, the mother of the Holy Virgin."

Thoughts of going into a convent forthwith, and never showing herself in the world again, were rushing through

Monna Brigida's mind. There was nothing possible for her but to take care of her soul. Of course there were spectators laughing: she had no need to look round to assure herself of that. Well! it would, perhaps, be better to be forced to think more of Paradise. But at the thought that the dear accustomed world was no longer in her choice, there gathered some of those hard tears which just moisten elderly eyes, and then she could see but dimly a large rough hand holding a red cross, which was suddenly thrust before her over the shoulders of the boys, while a strong guttural voice said—

“Only four quattrini, madonna, blessing and all! Buy it. You'll find a comfort in it now your wig's gone. Deh! what are we sinners doing all our lives? Making soup in a basket, and getting nothing but the scum for our stomachs. Better buy a blessing, madonna! Only four quattrini; the profit is not so much as the smell of a darnaro, and it goes to the poor.”

Monna Brigida, in dim-eyed confusion, was proceeding to the further submission of reaching money from her embroidered scarsella, at present hidden by her silk mantle, when the group round her, which she had not yet entertained the idea of escaping, opened before a figure as welcome as an angel loosing prison bolts.

“Romola, look at me!” said Monna Brigida, in a piteous tone, putting out both her hands.

The white troop was already moving away, with a slight consciousness that its zeal about the head-gear had been superabundant enough to afford a dispensation from any further demand for penitential offerings.

“Dear cousin, don't be distressed,” said Romola, smitten with pity, yet hardly able to help smiling at the sudden apparition of her kinswoman in a genuine, natural guise, strangely contrasted with all memories of her. She took the black drapery from her own head and threw it over Monna Brigida's. “There,” she went on soothingly, “no one will remark you now. We will turn down the Via del Palagio and go straight to our house.”

They hastened away, Monna Brigida grasping Romola's hand tightly, as if to get a stronger assurance of her being actually there.

“Ah, my Romola, my dear child!” said the short fat woman, hurrying with frequent steps to keep pace with the majestic young figure beside her: “what an old scarecrow I am! I must be good—I mean to be good!”

"Yes, yes; buy a cross!" said the guttural voice, while the rough hand was thrust once more before Monna Brigida: for Bratti was not to be abashed by Romola's presence into renouncing a probable customer, and had quietly followed up their retreat. "Only four quattrini, blessing and all—and if there was any profit, it would all go to the poor."

Monna Brigida would have been compelled to pause, even if she had been in a less submissive mood. She put up one hand deprecatingly to arrest Romola's remonstrance, and with the other reached out a grosso, "worth many white quattrini, saying, in an entreating tone—

"Take it, good man, and begone."

"You're in the right, madonna," said Bratti, taking the coin quickly, and thrusting the cross into her hand; "I'll not offer you change, for I might as well rob you of a mass. What! we must all be scorched a little, but you'll come off the easier; better fall from the window than the roof. A good Easter and a good year to you!"

"Well, Romola," cried Monna Brigida, pathetically, as Bratti left them, "if I'm to be a Piagnone it's no matter how I look!"

"Dear cousin," said Romola, smiling at her affectionately, "you don't know how much better you look than you ever did before. I see now how good-natured your face is, like yourself. That red and finery seemed to thrust themselves forward and hide expression. Ask our Piero or any other painter if he would not rather paint your portrait now than before. I think all lines of the human face have something either touching or grand, unless they seem to come from low passions. How fine old men are, like my godfather! Why should not old women look grand and simple?"

"Yes, when one gets to be sixty, my Romola," said Brigida, relapsing a little; "but I'm only fifty-five, and Monna Berta, and everybody—but it's no use: I will be good, like you. Your mother, if she'd been alive, would have been as old as I am; we were cousins together. One *must* either die or get old. But it doesn't matter about being old if one's a Piagnone."

CHAPTER LII.

A PROPHETESS.

THE incidents of that Carnival day seemed to Romola to carry no other personal consequences to her than the new care of supporting poor cousin Brigida in her fluctuating resignation to age and gray hairs; but they introduced a Lenten time in which she was kept at a high pitch of mental excitement and active effort.

Bernardo del Nero had been elected Gonfaloniere. By great exertions the Medicean party had so far triumphed, and that triumph had deepened Romola's presentiment of some secretly-prepared scheme likely to ripen either into success or betrayal during these two months of her godfather's authority. Every morning the dim daybreak as it peered into her room seemed to be that haunting fear coming back to her. Every morning the fear went with her as she passed through the streets on her way to the early sermon in the Duomo: but there she gradually lost the sense of its chill presence, as men lose the dread of death in the clash of battle.

In the Duomo she felt herself sharing in a passionate conflict which had wider relations than any enclosed within the walls of Florence. For Savonarola was preaching—preaching the last course of Lenten sermons he was ever allowed to finish in the Duomo: he knew that excommunication was imminent, and he had reached the point of defying it. He held up the condition of the Church in the terrible mirror of his unflinching speech, which called things by their right names and dealt in no polite periphrases; he proclaimed with heightening confidence the advent of renovation—of a moment when there would be a general revolt against corruption. As to his own destiny, he seemed to have a double and alternating prevision: sometimes he saw himself taking a glorious part in that revolt, sending forth a voice that would be heard through all Christendom, and making the dead body of the Church tremble into new life, as the body of Lazarus trembled when the Divine voice pierced the sepulchre; sometimes he saw no prospect for himself but persecution and martyrdom:—this life for him was only a vigil, and only after death would come the dawn.

The position was one which must have had its impressiveness for all minds that were not of the dullest order, even if they were inclined, as Macchiavelli was, to interpret the Frate's character by a key that presupposed no loftiness. To Romola, whose kindred ardor gave her a firm belief in Savonarola's genuine greatness of purpose, the crisis was as stirring as if it had been part of her personal lot. It blent itself as an exalting memory with all her daily labors; and those labors were calling not only for difficult perseverance, but for new courage. Famine had never yet taken its flight from Florence, and all distress, by its long continuance, was getting harder to bear; disease was spreading in the crowded city, and the Plague was expected. As Romola walked, often in weariness, among the sick, the hungry and the murmuring, she felt it good to be inspired by something more than her pity—by the belief in a heroism struggling for sublime ends, toward which the daily action of her pity could only tend feebly, as the dews that freshen the weedy ground to-day tend to prepare an unseen harvest in the years to come.

But that mighty music which stirred her in the Duomo was not without its jarring notes. Since those first days of glowing hope when the Frate, seeing the near triumph of good in the reform of the Republic and the coming of the French deliverer, had preached peace, charity, and oblivion of political differences, there had been a marked change of conditions: political intrigue had been too obstinate to allow of the desired oblivion; the belief in the French deliverer, who had turned his back on his high mission, seemed to have wrought harm; and hostility, both on a petty and on a grand scale, was attacking the Prophet with new weapons and new determination.

It followed that the spirit of contention and self-vindication pierced more and more conspicuously in his sermons; that he was urged to meet the popular demands not only by increased insistence and detail concerning visions and private revelations, but by a tone of defiant confidence against objectors; and from having denounced the desire for the miraculous, and declared that miracles had no relation to true faith, he had come to assert that at the right moment the Divine power would attest the truth of his prophetic preaching by a miracle. And continually, in the rapid transitions of excited feeling, as the vision of triumphant good receded behind the actual predominance of evil, the threats of coming vengeance against vicious

tyrants and corrupt priests gathered some impetus from personal exasperation, as well as from indignant zeal.

In the career of a great public orator who yields himself to the inspiration of the moment, that conflict of selfish and unselfish emotion which in most men is hidden in the chamber of the soul, is brought into terrible evidence: the language of the inner voices is written out in letters of fire.

But if the tones of exasperation jarred on Romola, there was often another member of Fra Girolamo's audience to whom they were the only thrilling tones, like the vibration of deep bass notes to the deaf. Baldassarre had found out that the wonderful Frate was preaching again, and as often as he could, he went to hear the Lenten sermon, that he might drink in the threats of a voice which seemed like a power on the side of justice. He went the more because he had seen that Romola went too; for he was waiting and watching for a time when not only outward circumstances, but his own varying mental state, would mark the right moment for seeking an interview with her. Twice Romola had caught sight of his face in the Duomo—once when its dark glance was fixed on hers. She wished not to see it again, and yet she looked for it, as men look for the reappearance of a portent. But any revelation that might be yet to come about this old man was a subordinate fear now: it referred, she thought, only to the past, and her anxiety was almost absorbed by the present.

Yet the stirring Lent passed by; April, the second and final month of her godfather's supreme authority, was near its close; and nothing had occurred to fulfill her presentiment. In the public mind, too, there had been fears, and rumors had spread from Rome of a menacing activity on the part of Piero de Medici; but in a few days the suspected Bernardo would go out of power.

Romola was trying to gather some courage from the review of her futile fears, when on the twenty-seventh, as she was walking out on her usual errands of mercy in the afternoon, she was met by a messenger from Camilla Rucellai, chief among the feminine seers of Florence, desiring her presence forthwith on matters of the highest moment. Romola, who shrank with unconquerable repulsion from the shrill volubility of those illuminated women, and had just now a special repugnance toward Camilla because of a report that she had announced revelations hostile to Bernardo del Nero, was at first inclined to send back a flat refusal. Camilla's message might refer to pub-

lic affairs, and Romola's immediate prompting was to close her ears against knowledge that might only make her mental burden heavier. But it had become so thoroughly her habit to reject her impulsive choice, and to obey passively the guidance of outward claims, that, reproving herself for allowing her presentiments to make her cowardly and selfish, she ended by compliance, and went straight to Camilla.

She found the nervous gray-haired woman in a chamber arranged as much as possible like a convent cell. The thin fingers clutching Romola as she sat, and the eager voice addressing her at first in a loud whisper caused her a physical shrinking that made it difficult for her to keep her seat.

Camilla had a vision to communicate—a vision in which it had been revealed to her by Romola's Angel, that Romola knew certain secrets concerning her godfather, Bernardo del Nero, which, if disclosed, might save the Republic from peril. Camilla's voice rose louder and higher as she narrated her vision, and ended by exhorting Romola to obey the command of her Angel, and separate herself from the enemy of God.

Romola's impetuosity was that of a massive nature, and, excepting moments when she was deeply stirred, her manner was calm and self-controlled. She had a constitutional disgust for the shallow excitability of women like Camilla, whose faculties seemed all wrought up into fantasies, leaving nothing for emotion or thought. The exhortation was not yet ended when she started up and attempted to wrench her arm from Camilla's tightening grasp. It was of no use. The prophetess kept her hold like a crab, and, only incited to more eager exhortation by Romola's resistance, was carried beyond her own intention into a shrill statement of other visions which were to corroborate this. Christ himself had appeared to her and ordered her to send his commands to certain citizens in office that they should throw Bernardo del Nero from the window of the Palazzo Vecchio. Fra Girolamo himself knew of it, and had not dared this time to say that the vision was not of Divine authority.

"And since then," said Camilla, in her excited treble, straining upward with wild eyes toward Romola's face, "the Blessed Infant has come to me and laid a wafer of sweetness on my tongue in token of his pleasure that I had done his will."

"Let me go!" said Romola, in a deep voice of anger. "God grant you are mad! else you are detestably wicked!"

The violence of her effort to be free was too strong for Camilla now. She wrenched away her arm and rushed out of the room, not pausing till she had hurriedly gone far along the street, and found herself close to the church of the Badia. She had but to pass behind the curtain under the old stone arch, and she would find a sanctuary shut in from the noise and hurry of the street, where all objects and all uses suggested the thought of an eternal peace subsisting in the midst of turmoil.

She turned in, and sinking down on the step of the altar in front of Filippino Lippi's serene Virgin appearing to St. Bernard, she waited in hope that the inward tumult which agitated her would by-and-by subside.

The thought which pressed on her the most acutely was that Camilla could allege Savonarola's countenance of her wicked folly. Romola did not for a moment believe that he had sanctioned the throwing of Bernardo del Nero from the window as a Divine suggestion; she felt certain that there was falsehood or mistake in that allegation. Savonarola had become more and more severe in his views of resistance to malcontents; but the ideas of strict law and order were fundamental to all his political teaching. Still, since he knew the possibly fatal effects of visions like Camilla's, since he had a marked distrust of such spirit-seeing women, and kept aloof from them as much as possible, why, with his readiness to denounce wrong from the pulpit, did he not publicly denounce these pretended revelations which brought new darkness instead of light across the conception of a Supreme Will? Why? The answer came with painful clearness: he was fettered inwardly by the consciousness that such revelations were not, in their basis, distinctly separable from his own visions. He was fettered outwardly by the foreseen consequence of raising a cry against himself even among members of his own party, as one who would suppress all Divine inspiration of which he himself was not the vehicle—he or his confidential and supplementary seer of visions, Fra Salvestro.

Romola, kneeling with buried face on the altar-step, was enduring one of those sickening moments, when the enthusiasm which had come to her as the only energy strong enough to make life worthy, seemed to be inevitably bound up with vain dreams and willful eye-shutting. Her mind

rushed back with a new attraction toward the strong worldly sense, the dignified prudence, the untheoretic virtues of her godfather, who was to be treated as a sort of Agag because he held that a more restricted form of government was better than the Great Council, and because he would not pretend to forget old ties to the banished family.

But with this last thought rose the presentiment of some plot to restore the Medici; and then again she felt that the popular party was half justified in its fierce suspicion. Again she felt that to keep the Government of Florence pure, and to keep out a vicious rule, was a sacred cause: the Frate was right there, and had carried her understanding irrevocably with him. But at this moment the assent of her understanding went alone; it was given unwillingly. Her heart was recoiling from a right allied to so much narrowness; a right apparently entailing that hard systematic judgment of men which measures them by assents and denials quite superficial to the manhood within them. Her affection and respect were clinging with new tenacity to her godfather, and with him to those memories of her father which were in the same opposition to the division of men into sheep and goats by the easy mark of some political or religious symbol.

After all has been said that can be said about the widening influence of ideas, it remains true that they would hardly be such strong agents unless they were taken in a solvent of feeling. The great world-struggle of developing thought is continually foreshadowed in the struggle of the affections, seeking a justification for love and hope.

If Romola's intellect had been less capable of discerning the complexities in human things, all the early loving associations of her life would have forbidden her to accept implicitly the denunciatory exclusiveness of Savonarola. She had simply felt that his mind had suggested deeper and more efficacious truth to her than any other, and the large breathing-room she found in his grand view of human duties had made her patient toward that part of his teaching which she could not absorb, so long as its practical effect came into collision with no strong force in her. But now a sudden insurrection of feeling had brought about that collision. Her indignation, once roused by Camilla's visions, could not pause there, but ran like an illuminating fire over all the kindred facts in Savonarola's teaching, and for the moment she felt what was true in the scornful

sarcasms she heard continually flung against him, more keenly than she felt what was false.

But it was an illumination that made all life look ghastly to her. Where were the beings to whom she could cling, with whom she could work and endure, with the belief that she was working for the right? On the side from which moral energy came lay a fanaticism from which she was shrinking with newly-startled repulsion; on the side to which she was drawn by affection and memory, there was the presentiment of some secret plotting, which her judgment told her would not be unfairly called crime. And still surmounting every other thought was the dread inspired by Tito's hints, lest that presentiment should be converted into knowledge, in such a way that she would be torn by irreconcilable claims.

Calmness would not come even on the altar-steps; it would not come from looking at the serene picture where the saint, writing in the rocky solitude, was being visited by faces with celestial peace in them. Romola was in the hard press of human difficulties, and that rocky solitude was too far off. She rose from her knees that she might hasten to her sick people in the courtyard, and by some immediate beneficent action, revive that sense of worth in life which at this moment was unfed by any wider faith. But when she turned round, she found herself face to face with a man who was standing only two yards off her. The man was Baldassarre.

CHAPTER LIII.

ON SAN MINIATO.

"I WOULD speak with you," said Baldassarre, as Romola looked at him in silent expectation. It was plain that he had followed her, and had been waiting for her. She was going at last to know the secret about him.

"Yes," she said, with the same sort of submission that she might have shown under an imposed penance. "But you wish to go where no one can hear us?"

"Where *he* will not come upon us," said Baldassarre, turning and glancing behind him timidly. "Out—in the air—away from the streets."

"I sometimes go to San Miniato at this hour," said Romola. "If you like, I will go now, and you can follow me. It is far, but we can be solitary there."

He nodded assent, and Romola set out. To some women it might have seemed an alarming risk to go to a comparatively solitary spot with a man who had some of the outward signs of that madness which Tito attributed to him. But Romola was not given to personal fears, and she was glad of the distance that interposed some delay before another blow fell on her. The afternoon was far advanced, and the sun was already low in the west, when she paused on some rough ground in the shadow of the cypress-trunks, and looked round for Baldassarre. He was not far off, but when he reached her he was glad to sink down on an edge of stony earth. His thick-set frame had no longer the sturdy vigor which belonged to it when he first appeared with the rope round him in the Duomo; and under the transient tremor caused by the exertion of walking up the hill, his eyes seemed to have a more helpless vagueness.

"The hill is steep," said Romola, with compassionate gentleness, seating herself by him. "And I fear you have been weakened by want."

He turned his head and fixed his eyes on her in silence, unable, now the moment of speech was come, to seize the words that would convey the thought he wanted to utter; and she remained as motionless as she could, lest he should suppose her impatient. He looked like nothing higher than a common-bred, neglected old man, but she was used now to be very near to such people, and to think a great deal about their troubles. Gradually his glance gathered a more definite expression, and at last he said with abrupt emphasis—

"Ah! you would have been my daughter!"

The swift flush came in Romola's face and went back again as swiftly, leaving her with white lips a little apart, like a marble image of horror. For her mind, the revelation was made. She divined the facts that lay behind that single word, and in the first moment there could be no check to the impulsive belief which sprang from her keen experience of Tito's nature. The sensitive response of her face was a stimulus to Baldassarre: for the first time his words had wrought their right effect. He went on with gathering eagerness and firmness, laying his hand on her arm.

"You are a woman of proud blood—is it not true? You go to hear the preacher; you hate baseness—baseness that smiles and triumphs. You hate your husband?"

"Oh, God! were you really his father?" said Romola, in a low voice, too entirely possessed by the images of the past to take any note of Baldassarre's question. "Or was it as he said? Did you take him when he was little?"

"Ah, you believe me—you know what he is!" said Baldassarre, exultingly, tightening the pressure on her arm, as if the contact gave him power. "You will help me?"

"Yes," said Romola, not interpreting the words as he meant them. She laid her palm gently on the rough hand that grasped her arm, and the tears came to her eyes as she looked at him. "Oh, it is piteous! Tell me—you were a great scholar; you taught him. *How* is it?"

She broke off. Tito's allegation of this man's madness had come across her; and where were the signs even of past refinement? But she had the self-command not to move her hand. She sat perfectly still, waiting to listen with new caution.

"It is gone!—it is all gone!" said Baldassarre; "and they would not believe me, because he lied, and said I was mad; and they had me dragged to prison. And I am old—my mind will not come back. And the world is against me."

He paused a moment, and his eyes sank as if he were under a wave of despondency. Then he looked up at her again, and said with renewed eagerness—

"But *you* are not against me. He made you love him, and he has been false to you; and you hate him. Yes, he made *me* love him: he was beautiful and gentle, and I was a lonely man. I took him when they were beating him. He slept in my bosom when he was little, and I watched him as he grew, and gave him all my knowledge, and everything that was mine I meant to be his. I had many things: money, and books, and gems. He had my gems—he sold them; and he left me in slavery. He never came to seek me, and when I came back poor and in misery, he denied me. He said I was a madman."

"He told us his father was dead—was drowned," said Romola, faintly. "Surely he must have believed it then. Oh! he could not have been so base *then*!"

A vision had risen of what Tito was to her in those first days when she thought no more of wrong in him than a

child thinks of poison in flowers. The yearning regret that lay in that memory brought some relief from the tension of horror. With one great sob the tears rushed forth.

"Ah, you are young, and the tears come easily," said Baldassarre, with some impatience. "But tears are no good; they only put out the fire within, and it is the fire that works. Tears will hinder us. Listen to me."

Romola turned toward him with a slight start. Again the possibility of his madness had darted through her mind, and checked the rush of belief. If, after all, this man were only a mad assassin? But her deep belief in this story still lay behind, and it was more in sympathy than in fear that she avoided the risk of paining him by any show of doubt.

"Tell me," she said, as gently as she could, "how did you lose your memory—your scholarship?"

"I was ill. I can't tell how long—it was a blank. I remember nothing, only at last I was sitting in the sun among the stones, and everything else was darkness. And slowly, and by degrees, I felt something besides that: a longing for something—I did not know what—that never came. And when I was in the ship on the waters I began to know what I longed for; it was for the Boy to come back—it was to find all my thoughts again, for I was locked away outside them all. And I am outside now. I feel nothing but a wall and darkness."

Baldassarre had become dreamy again, and sank into silence, resting his head between his hands; and again Romola's belief in him had submerged all cautioning doubts. The pity with which she dwelt on his words seemed like the revival of an old pang. Had she not daily seen how her father missed Dino and the future he had dreamed of in that son?

"It all came back once," Baldassarre went on presently. "I was master of everything. I saw all the world again, and my gems, and my books; and I thought I had him in my power, and I went to expose him where—where the lights were and the trees; and he lied again, and said I was mad, and they dragged me away to prison—Wickedness is strong; and he wears armor."

The fierceness had flamed up again. He spoke with his former intensity, and again he grasped Romola's arm.

"But you will help me? He has been false to you too. He has another wife, and she has children. He makes her

believe he is her husband, and she is a foolish, helpless thing. I will show you where she lives."

The first shock that passed through Romola was visibly one of anger. The woman's sense of indignity was inevitably foremost. Baldassarre instinctively felt her in sympathy with him.

"You hate him," he went on. "Is it not true? There is no love between you; I know that. I know women can hate; and you have proud blood. You hate falseness, and you can love revenge."

Romola sat paralyzed by the shock of conflicting feelings. She was not conscious of the grasp that was bruising her tender arm.

"You shall contrive it," said Baldassarre, presently, in an eager whisper. "I have learned by heart that you are his rightful wife. You are a noble woman. You go to hear the preacher of vengeance; you will help justice. But you will think for me. My mind goes—everything goes sometimes—all but the fire. The fire is God: it is justice: it will not die. You believe that—is it not true? If they will not hang him for robbing me, you will take away his armor—you will make him go without it, and I will stab him. I have a knife, and my arm is still strong enough."

He put his hand under his tunic, and reached out the hidden knife, feeling the edge abstractedly, as if he needed the sensation to keep alive his ideas.

It seemed to Romola as if every fresh hour of her life were to become more difficult than the last. Her judgment was too vigorous and rapid for her to fall into the mistake of using futile deprecatory words to a man in Baldassarre's state of mind. She chose not to answer his last speech. She would win time for his excitement to allay itself by asking something else that she cared to know. She spoke rather tremulously—

"You say she is foolish and helpless—that other wife—and believes him to be her real husband. Perhaps he is: perhaps he married her before he married me."

"I cannot tell," said Baldassarre, pausing in that action of feeling the knife, and looking bewildered. "I can remember no more. I only know where she lives. You shall see her. I will take you; but not now," he added hurriedly, "*he* may be there. The night is coming on."

"It is true," said Romola, starting up with a sudden

consciousness that the sun had set and the hills were darkening; "but you will come and take me—when?"

"In the morning," said Baldassarre, dreaming that she, too, wanted to hurry to her vengeance.

"Come to me, then, where you came to me to-day, in the church. I will be there at ten; and if you are not there, I will go again toward midday. Can you remember?"

"Midday," said Baldassarre — "only midday. The same place, and midday. And, after that," he added, rising and grasping her arm again with his left hand, while he held the knife in his right; "we will have our revenge. He shall feel the sharp edge of justice. The world is against me, but you will help me."

"I would help you in other ways," said Romola, making a first timid effort to dispel his illusion about her. "I fear you are in want; you have to labor, and get little. I should like to bring you comforts and make you feel again that there is some one who cares for you."

"Talk no more about that," said Baldassarre, fiercely. "I will have nothing else. Help me to wring one drop of vengeance on this side of the grave. I have nothing but my knife. It is sharp; but there is a moment after the thrust when men see the face of death,—and it shall be *my* face that he will see."

He loosed his hold, and sank down again in a sitting posture. Romola felt helpless: she must defer all intentions till the morrow.

"Midday, then," she said, in a distinct voice.

"Yes," he answered, with an air of exhaustion. "Go; I will rest here."

She hastened away. Turning at the last spot whence he was likely to be in sight, she saw him seated still.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE EVENING AND THE MORNING.

ROMOLA had a purpose in her mind as she was hastening away; a purpose which had been growing through the afternoon hours like a side-stream, rising higher and higher along with the main current. It was less a resolve than a necessity of her feeling. Heedless of the darkening

streets, and not caring to call for Maso's slow escort, she hurried across the bridge where the river showed itself black before the distant dying red, and took the most direct way to the Old Palace. She might encounter her husband there. No matter. She could not weigh probabilities; she must discharge her heart. She did not know what she passed in the pillared court or up the wide stairs; she only knew that she asked an usher for the Gonfaloniere, giving her name, and begging to be shown into a private room.

She was not left long alone with the frescoed figures and the newly-lit tapers. Soon the door opened, and Bernardo del Nero entered, still carrying his white head erect above his silk lucco.

"Romola, my child, what is this?" he said, in a tone of anxious surprise, as he closed the door.

She had uncovered her head and went toward him without speaking. He laid his hand on her shoulder, and held her a little way from him that he might see her better. Her face was haggard from fatigue and long agitation, her hair had rolled down in disorder; but there was an excitement in her eyes that seemed to have triumphed over the bodily consciousness.

"What has he done?" said Bernardo, abruptly. "Tell me everything, child; throw away pride. I am your father."

"It is not about myself—nothing about myself," said Romola, hastily. "Dearest godfather, it is about you. I have heard things—some I cannot tell you. But you are in danger in the palace; you are in danger everywhere. There are fanatical men who would harm you, and—and there are traitors. Trust nobody. If you trust, you will be betrayed."

Bernardo smiled.

"Have you worked yourself up into this agitation, my poor child," he said, raising his hand to her head and patting it gently, "to tell such old truth as that to an old man like me?"

"Oh, no, no! they are not old truths that I mean," said Romola, pressing her clasped hands painfully together, as if that action would help her to suppress what must not be told. "They are fresh things that I know, but cannot tell. Dearest godfather, you know I am not foolish. I would not come to you without reason. Is it too late to warn you against any one, *every* one who seems to be

working on your side? Is it too late to say, 'Go to your villa and keep away in the country when these three more days of office are over?' Oh, God! perhaps it is too late! and if any harm comes to you, it will be as if I had done it!"

The last words had burst from Romola involuntarily: a long-stifled feeling had found spasmodic utterance. But she herself was startled and arrested.

"I mean," she added, hesitatingly, "I know nothing positive. I only know what fills me with fears."

"Poor child!" said Bernardo, looking at her with quiet penetration for a moment or two. Then he said: "Go, Romola—go home and rest. These fears may be only big ugly shadows of something very little and harmless. Even traitors must see their interest in betraying; the rats will run where they smell the cheese, and there is no knowing yet which way the scent will come."

He paused, and turned away his eyes from her with an air of abstraction, till, with a slow shrug, he added—

"As for warnings, they are of no use to me, child. I enter into no plots, but I never forsake my colors. If I march abreast with obstinate men, who will rush on guns and pikes, I must share the consequences. Let us say no more about that. I have not many years left at the bottom of my sack for them to rob me of. Go, child; go home and rest."

He put his hand on her head again caressingly, and she could not help clinging to his arm, and pressing her brow against his shoulder. Her godfather's caress seemed the last thing that was left to her out of that young filial life, which now looked so happy to her even in its troubles, for they were troubles untainted by anything hateful.

"Is silence best, my Romola?" said the old man.

"Yes, now; but I cannot tell whether it always will be," she answered, hesitatingly, raising her head with an appealing look.

"Well, you have a father's ear while I am above ground"—he lifted the black drapery and folded it round her head, adding—"and a father's home; remember that." Then opening the door, he said: "There, hasten away. You are like a black ghost; you will be safe enough."

When Romola fell asleep that night, she slept deep. Agitation had reached its limits; she must gather strength before she could suffer more; and, in spite of rigid habit, she slept on far beyond sunrise.

When she awoke, it was to the sound of guns. Piero de Medici, with thirteen hundred men at his back, was before the gate that looks toward Rome.

So much Romola learned from Maso, with many circumstantial additions of dubious quality. A country-man had come in and alarmed the Signoria before it was light, else the city would have been taken by surprise. His master was not in the house, having been summoned to the Palazzo long ago. She sent out the old man again, that he might gather news, while she went up to the loggia from time to time to try and discern any signs of the dreaded entrance having been made, or of its having been effectively repelled. Maso brought her word that the great Piazza was full of armed men, and that many of the chief citizens suspected as friends of the Medici had been summoned to the palace and detained there. Some of the people seemed not to mind whether Piero got in or not, and some said the Signoria itself had invited him; but however that might be, they were giving him an ugly welcome; and the soldiers from Pisa were coming against him.

In her memory of those morning hours, there were not many things that Romola could distinguish as actual external experiences standing markedly out above the tumultuous waves of retrospect and anticipation. She knew that she had really walked to the Badia by the appointed time in spite of street alarms; she knew that she had waited there in vain. And the scene she had witnessed when she came out of the church, and stood watching on the steps while the doors were being closed behind her for the afternoon interval, always came back to her like a remembered waking.

There was a change in the faces and tones of the people, armed and unarmed, who were pausing or hurrying along the streets. The guns were firing again, but the sound only provoked laughter. She soon knew the cause of the change. Piero de Medici and his horsemen had turned their backs on Florence, and were galloping as fast as they could along the Siena road. She learned this from a substantial shopkeeping Piagnone, who had not yet laid down his pike.

"It is true," he ended, with a certain bitterness in his emphasis. "Piero is gone, but there are those left behind who were in the secret of his coming—we all know that; and if the new Signoria does its duty we shall soon know *who* they are."

The words darted through Romola like a sharp spasm; but the evil they foreshadowed was not yet close upon her, and as she entered her home again, her most pressing anxiety was the possibility that she had lost sight for a long while of Baldassarre.

CHAPTER LV.

WAITING.

THE lengthening sunny days went on without bringing either what Romola most desired or what she most dreaded. They brought no sign from Baldassarre, and, in spite of special watch on the part of the Government, no revelation of the suspected conspiracy. But they brought other things which touched her closely, and bridged the phantom-crowded space of anxiety with active sympathy in immediate trial. They brought the spreading Plague and the Excommunication of Savonarola.

Both these events tended to arrest her incipient alienation from the Frate, and to rivet again her attachment to the man who had opened to her the new life of duty, and who seemed now to be worsted in the fight for principle against profligacy. For Romola could not carry from day to day into the abodes of pestilence and misery the sublime excitement of a gladness that, since such anguish existed, she too existed to make some of the anguish less bitter, without remembering that she owed this transcendent moral life to Fra Girolamo. She could not witness the silencing and excommunication of a man whose distinction from the great mass of the clergy lay, not in any heretical belief, not in his superstitions, but in the energy with which he sought to make the Christian life a reality, without feeling herself drawn strongly to his side.

Far on in the hot days of June, the Excommunication, for some weeks arrived from Rome, was solemnly published in the Duomo. Romola went to witness the scene, that the resistance it inspired might invigorate that sympathy with Savonarola which was one source of her strength. It was in memorable contrast with the scene she had been accustomed to witness there.

Instead of upturned citizen-faces filling the vast area under the morning light, the youngest rising amphitheatre-wise toward the walls, and making a garland of hope around the memories of age—instead of the mighty voice thrilling all hearts with the sense of great things, visible and invisible, to be struggled for—there were the bare walls at evening made more sombre by the glimmer of tapers; there was the black and gray flock of monks and secular clergy with bent, unexpectant faces; there was the occasional tinkling of little bells in the pauses of a monotonous voice reading a sentence which had already been long hanging up in the churches; and at last there was the extinction of the tapers, and the slow, shuffling tread of monkish feet departing in the dim silence.

Romola's ardor on the side of the Frate was doubly strengthened by the gleeful triumph she saw in hard and coarse faces, and by the fear-stricken confusion in the faces and speech of many among his strongly-attached friends. The question where the duty of obedience ends, and the duty of resistance begins, could in no case be an easy one; but it was made overwhelmingly difficult by the belief that the Church was—not a compromise of parties to secure a more or less approximate justice in the appropriation of funds, but—a living organism, instinct with Divine power to bless and to curse. To most of the pious Florentines, who had hitherto felt no doubt in their adherence to the Frate, that belief in the Divine potency of the Church was not an embraced opinion, it was an inalienable impression, like the concavity of the blue firmament; and the boldness of Savonarola's written arguments that the Excommunication was unjust, and that, being unjust, it was not valid, only made them tremble the more, as a defiance cast at a mystic image, against whose subtle immeasurable power there was neither weapon nor defense.

But Romola, whose mind had not been allowed to draw its early nourishment from the traditional associations of the Christian community in which her father had lived a life apart, felt her relation to the Church only through Savonarola; his moral force had been the only authority to which she had bowed; and in his excommunication she only saw the menace of hostile vice: on one side she saw a man whose life was devoted to the ends of public virtue and spiritual purity, and on the other the assault of alarmed selfishness, headed by a lustful, greedy, lying, and murderous old man, once called Rodrigo Borgia, and now

lifted to the pinnacle of infamy as Pope Alexander VI. The finer shades of fact which soften the edge of such antitheses are not apt to be seen except by neutrals, who are not distressed to discern some folly in martyrs and some judiciousness in the men who burned them.

But Romola required a strength that neutrality could not give; and this Excommunication, which simplified and ennobled the resistant position of Savonarola by bringing into prominence its wider relations, seemed to come to her like a rescue from the threatening isolation of criticism and doubt. The Frate was now withdrawn from that smaller antagonism against Florentine enemies into which he continually fell in the unchecked excitement of the pulpit, and presented himself simply as appealing to the Christian world against a vicious exercise of ecclesiastical power. He was a standard-bearer leaping into the breach. Life never seems so clear and easy as when the heart is beating faster at the sight of some generous self-risking deed. We feel no doubt then what is the highest prize the soul can win; we almost believe in our own power to attain it. By a new current of such enthusiasm Romola was helped through these difficult summer days. She had ventured on no words to Tito that would apprise him of her late interview with Baldassarre, and the revelation he had made to her. What would such words win from him? No admission of the truth; nothing, probably, but a cool sarcasm about her sympathy with his assassin. Baldassarre was evidently helpless: the thing to be feared was, not that he should injure Tito, but that Tito, coming upon his traces, should carry out some new scheme for ridding himself of the injured man who was a haunting dread to him. Romola felt that she could do nothing decisive until she had seen Baldassarre again, and learned the full truth about that "other wife"—learned whether she were the wife to whom Tito was first bound.

The possibilities about that other wife, which involved the worst wound to her hereditary pride, mingled themselves as a newly-embittering suspicion with the earliest memories of her illusory love, eating away the lingering associations of tenderness with the past image of her husband; and her irresistible belief in the rest of Baldassarre's revelation made her shrink from Tito with a horror which would perhaps have urged some passionate speech in spite of herself if he had not been more than usually absent from home. Like many of the wealthier citizens in that

time of pestilence, he spent the intervals of business chiefly in the country: the agreeable Melema was welcome at many villas, and since Romola had refused to leave the city, he had no need to provide a country residence of his own.

But at last, in the later days of July, the alleviation of those public troubles which had absorbed her activity and much of her thought, left Romola to a less counteracted sense of her personal lot. The Plague had almost disappeared, and the position of Savonarola was made more hopeful by a favorable magistracy, who were writing urgent vindicatory letters to Rome on his behalf, entreating the withdrawal of the Excommunication.

Romola's healthy and vigorous frame was undergoing the reaction of languor inevitable after continuous excitement and over-exertion; but her mental restlessness would not allow her to remain at home without peremptory occupation, except during the sultry hours. In the cool of the morning and evening she walked out constantly, varying her direction as much as possible, with the vague hope that if Baldassarre were still alive she might encounter him. Perhaps some illness had brought a new paralysis of memory, and he had forgotten where she lived—forgotten even her existence. That was her most sanguine explanation of his non-appearance. The explanation she felt to be most probable was, that he had died of the Plague.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE OTHER WIFE.

THE morning warmth was already beginning to be rather oppressive to Romola, when, after a walk along by the walls on her way from San Marco, she turned toward the intersecting streets again at the gate of Santa Croce.

The Borgo La Croce was so still, that she listened to her own footsteps on the pavement in the sunny silence, until, on approaching a bend in the street, she saw, a few yards before her, a little child not more than three years old, with no other clothing than his white shirt, pause from a waddling run and look around him. In the first moment of coming nearer she could only see his back—a boy's back, square and sturdy, with a cloud of reddish-brown

curls above it; but in the next he turned toward her, and she could see his dark eyes wide with tears, and his lower lip pushed up and trembling, while his fat brown fists clutched his shirt helplessly. The glimpse of a tall black figure sending a shadow over him brought his bewildered fear to a climax, and a loud crying sob sent the big tears rolling.

Romola, with the ready maternal instinct which was one hidden source of her passionate tenderness, instantly uncovered her head, and, stooping down on the pavement, put her arms around him, and her cheek against his, while she spoke to him in caressing tones. At first his sobs were only the louder, but he made no effort to get away, and presently the outburst ceased with that strange abruptness which belongs to childish joys and griefs: his face lost its distortion, and was fixed in an open-mouthed gaze at Romola.

"You have lost yourself, little one," she said, kissing him. "Never mind! we will find the house again. Perhaps mamma will meet us."

She divined that he had made his escape at a moment when the mother's eyes were turned away from him, and thought it likely that he would soon be followed.

"Oh, what a heavy, heavy boy!" she said, trying to lift him. "I cannot carry you. Come, then, you must toddle back by my side."

The parted lips remained motionless in awed silence, and one brown fist still clutched the shirt with as much tenacity as ever: but the other yielded itself quite willingly to the wonderful white hand, strong but soft.

"You *have* a mamma?" said Romola, as they set out, looking down at the boy with a certain yearning. But he was mute. A girl under those circumstances might perhaps have chirped abundantly; not so this square-shouldered little man with the big cloud of curls.

He was awake to the first sign of his whereabouts, however. At the turning by the front of San Ambrogio he dragged Romola toward it, looking up at her.

"Ah, that is the way home, is it?" she said, smiling at him. He only thrust his head forward and pulled, as an admonition that they should go faster.

There was still another turning that he had a decided opinion about, and then Romola found herself in a short street leading to open garden ground. It was in front of a house at the end of this street that the little fellow

paused, pulling her toward some stone stairs. He had evidently no wish for her to loose his hand, and she would not have been willing to leave him without being sure that she was delivering him to his friends. They mounted the stairs, seeing but dimly in that sudden withdrawal from the sunlight, till, at the final landing-place, an extra stream of light came from an open doorway. Passing through a small lobby, they came to another open door, and there Romola paused. Her approach had not been heard.

On a low chair at the farther end of the room, opposite the light, sat Tessa, with one hand on the edge of the cradle, and her head hanging a little on one side, fast asleep. Near one of the windows, with her back turned toward the door, sat Monna Lisa at her work of preparing salad, in deaf unconsciousness. There was only an instant for Romola's eyes to take in that still scene; for Lillo snatched his hand away from her and ran up to his mother's side, not making any direct effort to wake her, but only leaning his head back against her arm, and surveying Romola seriously from that distance.

As Lillo pushed against her, Tessa opened her eyes, and looked up in bewilderment; but her glance had no sooner rested on the figure at the opposite doorway than she started up, blushed deeply, and began to tremble a little, neither speaking nor moving forward.

"Ah! we have seen each other before," said Romola, smiling, and coming forward. "I am glad it was *your* little boy. He was crying in the street; I suppose he had run away. So we walked together a little way, and then he knew where he was, and brought me here. But you had not missed him? That is well, else you would have been frightened."

The shock of finding that Lillo had run away overcame every other feeling in Tessa for the moment. Her color went again, and, seizing Lillo's arm, she ran with him to Monna Lisa, saying, with a half sob, loud in the old woman's ear—

"Oh, Lisa, you are wicked! Why will you stand with your back to the door? Lillo ran away ever so far into the street."

"Holy mother!" said Monna Lisa, in her meek, thick tone, letting the spoon fall from her hands. "Where were *you*, then? I thought you were there, and had your eye on him."

"But you *know* I go to sleep when I am rocking," said Tessa, in pettish remonstrance.

"Well, well, we must keep the outer door shut, or else tie him up," said Monna Lisa, "for he'll be as cunning as Satan before long, and that's the holy truth. But how came he back, then?"

This question recalled Tessa to the consciousness of Romola's presence. Without answering, she turned toward her, blushing and timid again, and Monna Lisa's eyes followed her movement. The old woman made a low reverence, and said—

"Doubtless the most noble lady brought him back." Then, advancing a little nearer to Romola, she added, "It's my shame for him to have been found with only his shirt on; but he kicked, and wouldn't have his other clothes on this morning, and the mother, poor thing, will never hear of his being beaten. But what's an old woman to do without a stick when the lad's legs get so strong? Let your nobleness look at his legs."

Lillo, conscious that his legs were in question, pulled his shirt up a little higher, and looked down at their olive roundness with a dispassionate and curious air. Romola laughed, and stooped to give him a caressing shake and kiss, and this action helped the reassurance that Tessa had already gathered from Monna Lisa's address to Romola. For when Naldo had been told about the adventure at the Carnival, and Tessa had asked him who the heavenly lady that had come just when she was wanted, and had vanished so soon, was likely to be—whether she could be the Holy Madonna herself?—he had answered, "Not exactly, my Tessa; only one of the saints," and had not chosen to say more. So that in the dream-like combination of small experience which made up Tessa's thought, Romola had remained confusedly associated with the pictures in the churches, and when she reappeared, the grateful remembrance of her protection was slightly tinged with religious awe—not deeply, for Tessa's dread was chiefly of ugly and evil beings. It seemed unlikely that good beings would be angry and punish her, as it was the nature of Nofri and the devil to do. And now that Monna Lisa had spoken freely about Lillo's legs and Romola had laughed, Tessa was more at her ease.

"Ninna's in the cradle," she said. "*She's* pretty too."

Romola went to look at the sleeping Ninna, and Monna

Lisa, one of the exceptionally meek deaf, who never expect to be spoken to, returned to her salad.

"Ah! she is waking: she has opened her blue eyes," said Romola. "You must take her up, and I will sit down in this chair—may I?—and nurse Lillo. Come, Lillo!"

She sat down in Tito's chair, and put out her arms toward the lad, whose eyes had followed her. He hesitated: and pointing his small fingers at her with a half-puzzled, half-angry feeling, said, "That's Babbo's chair," not seeing his way out of the difficulty if Babbo came and found Romola in his place.

"But Babbo is not here, and I shall go soon. Come, let me nurse you as he does," said Romola, wondering to herself for the first time what sort of Babbo he was whose wife was dressed in contadina fashion, but had a certain daintiness about her person that indicated idleness and plenty. Lillo consented to be lifted up, and, finding the lap exceedingly comfortable, began to explore her dress and hands, to see if there were any ornaments besides the rosary.

Tessa, who had hitherto been occupied in coaxing Ninna out of her waking peevishness, now sat down in her low chair, near Romola's knee, arranging Ninna's tiny person to advantage, jealous that the strange lady too seemed to notice the boy most, as Naldo did.

"Lillo was going to be angry with me, because I sat in Babbo's chair," said Romola, as she bent forward to kiss Ninna's little foot. "Will he come soon and want it?"

"Ah, no!" said Tessa, "you can sit in it a long while. I shall be sorry when you go. When you first came to take care of me at the Carnival I thought it was wonderful; you came and went away again so fast. And Naldo said perhaps you were a saint, and that made me tremble a little, though the saints are very good, I know; and you were good to me; and now you have taken care of Lillo. Perhaps you will always come and take care of me. That was how Naldo did a long while ago; he came and took care of me when I was frightened, one San Giovanni. I couldn't think where he came from—he was so beautiful and good. And so are you," ended Tessa, looking up at Romola with devout admiration.

"Naldo is your husband. His eyes are like Lillo's," said Romola, looking at the boy's darkly-penciled eyebrows, unusual at his age. She did not speak interrog-

atively, but with a quiet certainty of inference which was necessarily mysterious to Tessa.

"Ah! you know him!" she said, pausing a little in wonder. "Perhaps you know Nofri and Peretola, and our house on the hill, and everything. Yes, like Lillo's; but not his hair. His hair is dark and long——" she went on, getting rather excited. "Ah! if you know it, ecco!"

She had put her hand to a thin red silk cord that hung round her neck, and drew from her bosom the tiny old parchment *Breve*, the horn of red coral, and a long dark curl carefully tied at one end and suspended with those mystic treasures. She held them toward Romola, away from Ninna's snatching hand.

"It is a fresh one. I cut it lately. See how bright it is!" she said, laying it against the white background of Romola's fingers. "They get dim, and then he lets me cut another when his hair is grown; and I put it with the *Breve*, because sometimes he is away a long while, and then I think it helps to take care of me."

A slight shiver passed through Romola as the curl was laid across her fingers. At Tessa's first mention of her husband as having come mysteriously she knew not whence a possibility had risen before Romola that made her heart beat faster; for to one who is anxiously in search of a certain object the faintest suggestions have a peculiar significance. And when the curl was held toward her, it seemed for an instant like a mocking phantasm of the lock she herself had cut to wind with one of her own five years ago. But she preserved her outward calmness, bent not only on knowing the truth, but also on coming to that knowledge in a way that would not pain this poor, trusting, ignorant thing, with the child's mind in the woman's body. "Foolish and helpless": yes; so far she corresponded to Baldassarre's account.

"It is a beautiful curl," she said, resisting the impulse to withdraw her hand. "Lillo's curls will be like it, perhaps, for *his* cheek, too, is dark. And you never know where your husband goes to when he leaves you?"

"No," said Tessa, putting back her treasures out of the children's way. "But I know Messer San Michele takes care of him, for he gave him a beautiful coat, all made of little chains; and if he puts that on, nobody can kill him. And perhaps, if ——" Tessa hesitated a little, under a recurrence of that original dreamy wonder about Romola which had been expelled by chatting contact—"if you

were a saint, you would take care of him, too, because you have taken care of me and Lillo."

An agitated flush came over Romola's face in the first moment of certainty, but she had bent her cheek against Lillo's head. The feeling that leaped out in that flush was something like exultation at the thought that the wife's burden might be about to slip from her overladen shoulders; that this little ignorant creature might prove to be Tito's lawful wife. A strange exultation for a proud and high-born woman to have been brought to! But it seemed to Romola as if that were the only issue that would make duty anything else for her than an insoluble problem. Yet she was not deaf to Tessa's last appealing words; she raised her head, and said, in her clearest tones—

"I will always take care of you if I see you need me. But that beautiful coat? your husband did not wear it when you were first married? Perhaps he used not to be so long away from you then?"

"Ah, yes! he was. Much—much longer. So long, I thought he would never come back. I used to cry. Oh, me! I was beaten then; a long, long while ago at Peretola, where we had the goats and mules."

"And how long had you been married before your husband had that chain coat?" said Romola, her heart beating faster and faster.

Tessa looked meditative, and began to count on her fingers, and Romola watched the fingers as if they would tell the secret of her destiny.

"The chestnuts were ripe when we were married," said Tessa, marking off her thumb and fingers again as she spoke; "and then again they were ripe at Peretola before he came back, and then again, after that, on the hill. And soon the soldiers came, and we heard the trumpets, and then Naldo had the coat."

"You had been married more than two years. In which church were you married?" said Romola, too entirely absorbed by one thought to put any question that was less direct. Perhaps before the next morning she might go to her godfather and say that she was not Tito Melema's lawful wife—that the vows which had bound her to strive after an impossible union had been made void beforehand.

Tessa gave a slight start at Romola's new tone of inquiry, and looked up at her with a hesitating expression. Hitherto she had prattled on without consciousness that she

was making revelations, any more than when she said old things over and over again to Monna Lisa.

"Naldo said I was never to tell about that," she said, doubtfully. "Do you think he would not be angry if I told you?"

"It is right that you should tell me. Tell me everything," said Romola, looking at her with mild authority.

If the impression from Naldo's command had been much more recent than it was, the constraining effect of Romola's mysterious authority would have overcome it. But the sense that she was telling what she had never told before made her begin with a lowered voice.

"It was not in a church — it was at the Natività, when there was a fair, and all the people went overnight to see the Madonna in the Nunziata, and my mother was ill and couldn't go, and I took the bunch of cocoons for her; and then he came to me in the church and I heard him say, 'Tessa!' I knew him because he had taken care of me at the San Giovanni, and then we went into the piazza where the fair was, and I had some *berlingozzi*, for I was hungry and he was very good to me; and at the end of the piazza there was a holy father, and an altar like what they have at the processions outside the churches. So he married us, and then Naldo took me back into the church and left me; and I went home, and my mother died, and Nofri began to beat me more, and Naldo never came back. And I used to cry, and once at the Carnival I saw him and followed him, and he was angry, and said he would come some time, I must wait. So I went and waited; but, oh! it was a long while before he came; but he would have come if he could, for he was good; and then he took me away, because I cried and said I could not bear to stay with Nofri. And, oh! I was so glad, and since then I have been always happy, for I don't mind about the goats and mules, because I have Lillo and Ninna now; and Naldo is never angry, only I think he doesn't love Ninna so well as Lillo, and she is pretty."

Quite forgetting that she had thought her speech rather momentous at the beginning, Tessa fell to devouring Ninna with kisses, while Romola sat in silence with absent eyes. It was inevitable that in this moment she should think of the three beings before her chiefly in their relation to her own lot, and she was feeling the chill of disappointment that her difficulties were not to be solved by external law. She had relaxed her hold of Lillo, and was leaning her

cheek against her hand, seeing nothing of the scene around her. Lillo was quick in perceiving a change that was not agreeable to him; he had not yet made any return to her caresses, but he objected to their withdrawal, and putting up both his brown arms to pull her head toward him, he said, "Play with me again!"

Romola, roused from her self-absorption, clasped the lad anew, and looked from him to Tessa, who had now paused from her shower of kisses, and seemed to have returned to the more placid delight of contemplating the heavenly lady's face. That face was undergoing a subtle change, like the gradual oncoming of a warmer, softer light. Presently Romola took her scissors from her scar-sella, and cut off one of her long, wavy locks, while the three pair of wide eyes followed her movements with kitten-like observation.

"I must go away from you now," she said, "but I will leave this lock of hair that it may remind you of me, because if you are ever in trouble you can think that perhaps God will send me to take care of you again. I cannot tell you where to find me, but if I ever know that you want me I will come to you. Addio!"

She had set down Lillo hurriedly, and held out her hand to Tessa, who kissed it with a mixture of awe and sorrow at this parting. Romola's mind was oppressed with thoughts; she needed to be alone as soon as possible, but with her habitual care for the least fortunate, she turned aside to put her hand in a friendly way on Monna Lisa's shoulder and make her a farewell sign. Before the old woman had finished her deep reverence, Romola had disappeared.

Monna Lisa and Tessa moved toward each other by simultaneous impulses, while the two children stood clinging to their mother's skirts as if they, too, felt the atmosphere of awe.

"Do you think she *was* a saint?" said Tessa, in Lisa's ear, showing her the lock.

Lisa rejected that notion very decidedly by a backward movement of her fingers, and then stroking the rippled gold, said—

"She's a great and noble lady. I saw such in my youth."

Romola went home and sat alone through the sultry hours of that day with the heavy certainty that her lot was unchanged. She was thrown back again on the con-

flict between the demands of an outward law, which she recognized as a widely ramifying obligation, and the demands of inner moral facts which were becoming more and more peremptory. She had drunk in deeply the spirit of that teaching by which Savonarola had urged her to return to her place. She felt that the sanctity attached to all close relations, and, therefore, pre-eminently to the closest, was but the expression in outward law of that result toward which all human goodness and nobleness must spontaneously tend; that the light abandonment of ties, whether inherited or voluntary, because they had ceased to be pleasant, was the uprooting of social and personal virtue. What else had Tito's crime toward Baldassarre been but that abandonment working itself out to the most hideous extreme of falsity and ingratitude?

And the inspiring consciousness breathed into her by Savonarola's influence that her lot was vitally united with the general lot had exalted even the minor details of obligation into religion. She felt that she was marching with a great army; she was feeling the stress of a common life. If victims were needed, and it was uncertain on whom the lot might fall, she would stand ready to answer to her name. She had stood long; she had striven hard to fulfill the bond, but she had seen all the conditions which made the fulfillment possible gradually forsaking her. The one effect of her marriage tie seemed to be the stifling predominance over her of a nature that she despised. All her efforts at union had only made its impossibility more palpable, and the relation had become for her simply a degrading servitude. The law was sacred. Yes, but rebellion might be sacred too. It flashed upon her mind that the problem before her was essentially the same as that which had lain before Savonarola—the problem where the sacredness of obedience ended, and where the sacredness of rebellion began. To her, as to him, there had come one of those moments in life when the soul must dare to act on its own warrant, not only without external law to appeal to, but in the face of a law which is not unarmed with Divine lightnings—lightnings that may yet fall if the warrant has been false.

Before the sun had gone down she had adopted a resolve. She would ask no counsel of her godfather or of Savonarola until she had made one determined effort to speak freely with Tito and obtain his consent that she should live apart from him. She desired not to leave him clan-

destinely again, or to forsake Florence. She would tell him that if he ever felt a real need of her, she would come back to him. Was not that the utmost faithfulness to her bond that could be required of her? A shuddering anticipation came over her that he would clothe a refusal in a sneering suggestion that she should enter a convent as the only mode of quitting him that would not be scandalous. He knew well that her mind revolted from that means of escape, not only because of her own repugnance to a narrow rule, but because all the cherished memories of her father forbade that she should adopt a mode of life which was associated with his deepest griefs and his bitterest dislike.

Tito had announced his intention of coming home this evening. She would wait for him, and say what she had to say at once, for it was difficult to get his ear during the day. If he had the slightest suspicion that personal words were coming, he slipped away with an appearance of unpremeditated ease. When she sent for Maso to tell him that she would wait for his master, she observed that the old man looked at her and lingered with a mixture of hesitation and wondering anxiety; but, finding that she asked him no question, he slowly turned away. Why should she ask questions? Perhaps Maso only knew or guessed something of what she knew already.

It was late before Tito came. Romola had been pacing up and down the long room which had once been the library, with the windows open, and a loose white linen robe on instead of her usual black garment. She was glad of that change after the long hours of heat and motionless meditation; but the coolness and exercise made her more intensely wakeful, and as she went with the lamp in her hand to open the door for Tito, he might well have been startled by the vividness of her eyes and the expression of painful resolution, which was in contrast with her usual self-restrained quiescence before him. But it seemed that this excitement was just what he expected.

"Ah! it is you, Romola. Maso is gone to bed," he said, in a grave, quiet tone, interposing to close the door for her. Then, turning round, he said, looking at her more fully than he was wont, "you have heard it all, I see."

Romola quivered. *He* then was inclined to take the initiative. He had been to Tessa. She led the way through the nearest door, set down her lamp, and turned toward him again.

"You must not think despairingly of the consequences,"

said Tito, in a tone of soothing encouragement, at which Romola stood wondering, until he added, "The accused have too many family ties with all parties not to escape; and Messer Bernardo del Nero has other things in his favor besides his age."

Romola started, and gave a cry as if she had been suddenly stricken by a sharp weapon.

"What! you did not know it?" said Tito, putting his hand under her arm that he might lead her to a seat; but she seemed to be unaware of his touch.

"Tell me," she said, hastily — "tell me what it is."

"A man, whose name you may forget — Lamberto dell Antella — who was banished, has been seized within the territory: a letter has been found on him of very dangerous import to the chief Mediceans, and the scoundrel, who was once a favorite hound of Piero de Medici, is ready now to swear what any one pleases against him or his friends. Some have made their escape, but five are now in prison."

"My godfather?" said Romola, scarcely above a whisper, as Tito made a slight pause.

"Yes; I grieve to say it. But along with him there are three, at least, whose names have a commanding interest even among the popular party — Niccolò Ridolfi, Lorenzo Tornabuoni, and Giannozzo Pucci."

The tide of Romola's feelings had been violently turned into a new channel. In the tumult of that moment there could be no check to the words which came as the impulsive utterance of her long-accumulating horror. When Tito had named the men of whom she felt certain he was the confederate, she said, with a recoiling gesture and low-toned bitterness —

"And *you* — you are safe?"

"You are certainly an amiable wife, my Romola," said Tito, with the coldest irony. "Yes; I am safe."

They turned away from each other in silence.

CHAPTER LVII.

WHY TITO WAS SAFE.

TITO had good reasons for saying that he was safe. In the last three months, during which he had foreseen the discovery of the Medicean conspirators as a probable event,

he had had plenty of time to provide himself with resources. He had been strengthening his influence at Rome and at Milan, by being the medium of secret information and indirect measures against the Frate and the popular party; he had cultivated more assiduously than ever the regard of this party, by showing subtle evidence that his political convictions were entirely on their side; and all the while, instead of withdrawing his agency from the Mediceans, he had sought to be more actively employed and exclusively trusted by them. It was easy to him to keep up this triple game. The principle of duplicity admitted by the Mediceans on their own behalf deprived them of any standard by which they could measure the trustworthiness of a colleague who had not, like themselves, hereditary interests, alliances, and prejudices, which were intensely Medicean. In their minds, to deceive the opposite party was fair stratagem; to deceive their own party was a baseness to which they felt no temptation; and, in using Tito's facile ability, they were not keenly awake to the fact that the absence of traditional attachments which made him a convenient agent was also the absence of what among themselves was the chief guarantee of mutual honor. Again, the Roman and Milanese friends of the aristocratic party, or Arrabbiati, who were the bitterest enemies of Savonarola, carried on a system of underhand correspondence and espionage, in which the deepest hypocrisy was the best service, and demanded the heaviest pay; so that to suspect an agent because he played a part strongly would have been an absurd want of logic. On the other hand, the Piagnoni of the popular party, who had the directness that belongs to energetic conviction, were the more inclined to credit Tito with sincerity in his political adhesion to them, because he affected no religious sympathies.

By virtue of these conditions, the last three months had been a time of flattering success to Tito. The result he most cared for was the securing of a future position for himself at Rome or at Milan; for he had a growing determination, when the favorable moment should come, to quit Florence for one of those great capitals where life was easier, and the rewards of talent and learning were more splendid. At present, the scale dipped in favor of Milan; and if within the year he could render certain services to Duke Ludovico Sforza, he had the prospect of a place at the Milanese court which outweighed the advantages of Rome.

The revelation of the Medicean conspiracy, then, had been a subject of forethought to Tito: but he had not been able to foresee the mode in which it would be brought about. The arrest of Lamberto dell Antella with a tell-tale letter on his person, and a bitter rancor against the Medici in his heart, was an incalculable event. It was not possible, in spite of the careful pretexts with which his agency had been guarded, that Tito should escape implication: he had never expected this in case of any wide discovery concerning the Medicean plots. But his quick mind had soon traced out the course that would secure his own safety with the fewest unpleasant concomitants. It is agreeable to keep a whole skin; but the skin still remains an organ sensitive to the atmosphere.

His reckoning had not deceived him. That night, before he returned home, he had secured the three results for which he most cared: he was to be freed from all proceedings against him on account of complicity with the Mediceans; he was to retain his secretaryship for another year, unless he previously resigned it; and, lastly, the price by which he had obtained these guarantees was to be kept as a State secret. The price would have been thought heavy by most men; and Tito himself would rather not have paid it.

He had applied himself first to win the mind of Francesco Valori, who was not only one of the Ten under whom he immediately held his secretaryship, but one of the special council appointed to investigate the evidence of the plot. Francesco Valori, as we have seen, was the head of the Piagnoni, a man with certain fine qualities that were not incompatible with violent partisanship, with an arrogant temper that alienated his friends, nor with bitter personal animosities—one of the bitterest being directed against Bernardo del Nero. To him, in a brief private interview, after obtaining a pledge of secrecy, Tito avowed his own agency for the Mediceans—an agency induced by motives about which he was very frank, declaring at the same time that he had always believed their efforts futile, and that he sincerely preferred the maintenance of the popular government; affected to confide to Valori, as a secret, his own personal dislike for Bernardo del Nero; and, after this preparation, came to the important statement that there was another Medicean plot, of which, if he obtained certain conditions from the government, he could, by a journey to Siena and into Romagna, where

Piero de Medici was again trying to gather forces, obtain documentary evidence to lay before the council. To this end it was essential that his character as a Medicean agent should be unshaken for all Mediceans, and hence the fact that he had been a source of information to the authorities must be wrapped in profound secrecy. Still, some odor of the facts might escape in spite of precaution, and before Tito could incur the unpleasant consequences of acting against his friends, he must be assured of immunity from any prosecution as a Medicean, and from deprivation of office for a year to come.

These propositions did not sound in the ear of Francesco Valori precisely as they sound to us. Valori's mind was not intensely bent on the estimation of Tito's conduct; and it *was* intensely bent on procuring an extreme sentence against the five prisoners. There were sure to be immense efforts to save them; and it was to be wished (on public grounds) that the evidence against them should be of the strongest, so as to alarm all well-affected men at the dangers of clemency. The character of legal proceedings at that time implied that evidence was one of those desirable things which could only be come at by foul means. To catch a few people and torture them into confessing everybody's guilt was one step toward justice; and it was not always easy to see the next, unless a traitor turned up. Lamberto dell Antella had been tortured in aid of his previous willingness to tell more than he knew; nevertheless, additional and stronger facts were desirable, especially against Bernardo del Nero, who, so far as appeared hitherto, had simply refrained from betraying the late plot after having tried in vain to discourage it; for the welfare of Florence demanded that the guilt of Bernardo del Nero should be put in the strongest light. So Francesco Valori zealously believed; and perhaps he was not himself aware that the strength of his zeal was determined by his hatred. He decided that Tito's proposition ought to be accepted, laid it before his colleagues without disclosing Tito's name, and won them over to his opinion. Late in the day, Tito was admitted to an audience of the Special Council, and produced a deep sensation among them by revealing another plot for insuring the mastery of Florence to Piero de Medici, which was to have been carried into execution in the middle of this very month of August. Documentary evidence on this subject would do more than anything else to make the right course clear. He received a commission to

start for Siena by break of day; and, besides this, he carried away with him from the council chamber a written guarantee of his immunity and his retention of office.

Among the twenty Florentines who bent their grave eyes on Tito, as he stood gracefully before them, speaking of startling things with easy periphrasis, and with that apparently unaffected admission of being actuated by motives short of the highest, which is often the intensest affectation, there were several whose minds were not too entirely preoccupied to pass a new judgment on him in these new circumstances; they silently concluded that this ingenious and serviceable Greek was in future rather to be used for public needs than for private intimacy. Unprincipled men were useful, enabling those who had more scruples to keep their hands tolerably clean in a world where there was much dirty work to be done. Indeed, it was not clear to respectable Florentine brains, unless they held the Frate's extravagant belief in a possible purity and loftiness to be striven for on this earth, how life was to be carried on in any department without human instruments whom it would not be unbecoming to kick or to spit upon in the act of handing them their wages. Some of these very men who passed a tacit judgment on Tito were shortly to be engaged in a memorable transaction that could by no means have been carried through without the use of an unscrupulousness as decided as his; but, as their own bright poet Pulci had said for them, it is one thing to love the fruits of treachery, and another thing to love traitors—

*"Il tradimento a molti piace assai,
Ma il traditore a gnun non piacque mai."*

The same society has had a gibbet for the murderer and a gibbet for the martyr, an execrating hiss for a dastardly act, and as loud a hiss for many a word of generous truthfulness or just insight: a mixed condition of things which is the sign, not of hopeless confusion, but of struggling order.

For Tito himself, he was not unaware that he had sunk a little in the estimate of the men who had accepted his services. He had that degree of self-contemplation which necessarily accompanies the habit of acting on well-considered reasons, of whatever quality; and if he could have chosen, he would have declined to see himself disapproved by men of the world. He had never meant to be disapproved; he had meant always to conduct himself so ably

that if he acted in opposition to the standard of other men they should not be aware of it; and the barrier between himself and Romola had been raised by the impossibility of such concealment with her. He shrank from condemnatory judgments as from a climate to which he could not adapt himself. But things were not so plastic in the hands of cleverness as could be wished, and events had turned out inconveniently. He had really no rancor against Messer Bernardo del Nero; he had a personal liking for Lorenzo Tornabuoni and Giannozzo Pucci. He had served them very ably, and in such a way that if their party had been winners he would have merited high reward; but was he to relinquish all the agreeable fruits of life because their party had failed? His proffer of a little additional proof against them would probably have no influence on their fate; in fact, he felt convinced that they would escape any extreme consequences; but if he had not given it, his own fortunes, which made a promising fabric, would have been utterly ruined. And what motive could any man really have, except his own interest? Florentines whose passions were engaged in their petty and precarious political schemes might have no self-interest separable from family pride and tenacity in old hatreds and attachments; a modern simpleton who swallowed whole one of the old systems of philosophy, and took the indigestion it occasioned for the signs of a divine afflux or the voice of an inward monitor, might see his interest in a form of self-conceit which he called self-rewarding virtue; fanatics who believed in the coming Scourge and Renovation might see their own interest in a future palm-branch and white robe: but no man of clear intellect allowed his course to be determined by such puerile impulses or questionable inward fumes. Did not Pontanus, poet and philosopher of unrivaled Latinity, make the finest possible oration at Naples to welcome the French king, who had come to dethrone the learned orator's royal friend and patron? and still Pontanus held up his head and prospered. Men did not really care about these things, except when their personal spleen was touched. It was weakness only that was despised; power of any sort carried its immunity; and no man, unless by very rare good fortune, could mount high in the world without incurring a few unpleasant necessities which laid him open to enmity, and perhaps to a little hissing, when enmity wanted a pretext.

It was a faint prognostic of that hissing, gathered by

Tito from certain indications when he was before the council, which gave his present conduct the character of an epoch to him, and made him dwell on it with argumentative vindication. It was not that he was taking a deeper step in wrong-doing, for it was not possible that he should feel any tie to the Mediceans to be stronger than the tie to his father; but his conduct to his father had been hidden by successful lying: his present act did not admit of total concealment—in its very nature it was a revelation. And Tito winced under his new liability to disesteem.

Well! a little patience, and in another year, or perhaps in half a year, he might turn his back on these hard, eager Florentines, with their futile quarrels and sinking fortunes. His brilliant success at Florence had had some ugly flaws in it: he had fallen in love with the wrong woman, and Baldassarre had come back under incalculable circumstances. But as Tito galloped with a loose rein toward Siena, he saw a future before him in which he would no longer be haunted by those mistakes. He had much money safe out of Florence already; he was in the fresh ripeness of eight-and-twenty; he was conscious of well-tryed skill. Could he not strip himself of the past, as of rehearsal clothing, and throw away the old bundle, to robe himself for the real scene?

It did not enter into Tito's meditations on the future, that, on issuing from the council chamber and descending the stairs, he had brushed against a man whose face he had not stayed to recognize in the lamplight. The man was Ser Ceccone—also willing to serve the State by giving information against unsuccessful employers.

CHAPTER LVIII.

A FINAL UNDERSTANDING.

TITO soon returned from Siena, but almost immediately set out on another journey, from which he did not return till the seventeenth of August. Nearly a fortnight had passed since the arrest of the accused, and still they were in prison, still their fate was uncertain. Romola had felt during this interval as if all cares were suspended for her,

other than watching the fluctuating probabilities concerning that fate. Sometimes they seemed strongly in favor of the prisoners; for the chances of effective interest on their behalf were heightened by delay, and an indefinite prospect of delay was opened by the reluctance of all persons in authority to incur the odium attendant on any decision. On the one side there was a loud cry that the Republic was in danger, and that lenity to the prisoners would be the signal of attack for all its enemies; on the other, there was a certainty that a sentence of death and confiscation of property passed on five citizens of distinguished name, would entail the rancorous hatred of their relatives on all who were conspicuously instrumental to such a sentence.

The final judgment properly lay with the Eight, who presided over the administration of criminal justice; and the sentence depended on a majority of six votes. But the Eight shrank from their onerous responsibility, and asked in this exceptional case to have it shared by the Signoria (or the Gonfaloniere and the eight Priors). The Signoria in its turn shrugged its shoulders, and proposed the appeal to the Great Council. For, according to a law passed by the earnest persuasion of Savonarola nearly three years before, whenever a citizen was condemned to death by the fatal six votes (called the *sei fave* or *six beans*, beans being in more senses than one the political pulse of Florence), he had the right of appealing from that sentence to the Great Council.

But in this stage of the business, the friends of the accused resisted the appeal, determined chiefly by the wish to gain delay; and, in fact, strict legality required that sentence should have been passed prior to the appeal. Their resistance prevailed, and a middle course was taken; the sentence was referred to a large assembly convened on the seventeenth, consisting of all the higher magistracies, the smaller council or Senate of Eighty, and a select number of citizens.

On this day Romola, with anxiety heightened by the possibility that before its close her godfather's fate might be decided, had obtained leave to see him for the second time, but only in the presence of witnesses. She had returned to the Via de Bardi in company with her cousin Brigida, still ignorant whether the council had come to any decisive issue; and Monna Brigida had gone out again to await the momentous news at the house of a friend

belonging to one of the magistracies, that she might bring back authentic tidings as soon as they were to be had.

Romola had sunk on the first seat in the bright saloon, too much agitated, too sick at heart, to care about her place, or be conscious of discordance in the objects that surrounded her. She sat with her back to the door, resting her head on her hands. It seemed a long while since Monna Brigida had gone, and Romola was expecting her return. But when the door opened she knew it was not Monna Brigida who entered.

Since she had parted from Tito on that memorable night, she had had no external proof to warrant her belief that he had won his safety by treachery; on the contrary, she had had evidence that he was still trusted by the Mediceans, and was believed by them to be accomplishing certain errands of theirs in Romagna, under cover of fulfilling a commission of the government. For the obscurity in which the evidence concerning the conspirators was shrouded allowed it to be understood that Tito had escaped any implication.

But Romola's suspicion was not to be dissipated; her horror of his conduct toward Baldassarre projected itself over every conception of his acts; it was as if she had seen him committing a murder, and had had a diseased impression ever after that his hands were covered with fresh blood.

As she heard his step on the stone floor, a chill shudder passed through her; she could not turn round, she could not rise to give any greeting. He did not speak, but after an instant's pause took a seat on the other side of the table just opposite to her. Then she raised her eyes and looked at him; but she was mute. He did not show any irritation, but said, coolly—

"This meeting corresponds with our parting, Romola. But I understand that it is a moment of terrible suspense. I am come, however, if you will listen to me, to bring you the relief of hope."

She started, and altered her position, but looked at him dubiously.

"It will not be unwelcome to you to hear—even though it is I who tell it—that the council is prorogued till the twenty-first. The Eight have been frightened at last into passing a sentence of condemnation, but the demand has now been made on behalf of the condemned for the Appeal to the Great Council."

Romola's face lost its dubious expression; she asked eagerly—

“And when is it to be made?”

“It has not yet been granted; but it *may* be granted. The Special Council is to meet again on the twenty-first to deliberate whether the Appeal shall be allowed or not. In the meantime there is an interval of three days, in which chances may occur in favor of the prisoners—in which interest may be used on their behalf.”

Romola started from her seat. The color had risen to her face like a visible thought, and her hands trembled. In that moment her feeling toward Tito was forgotten.

“Possibly,” said Tito, also rising, “your own intention may have anticipated what I was going to say. You are thinking of the Frate.”

“I am,” said Romola, looking at him with surprise. “Has he done anything? Is there anything to tell me?”

“Only this. It was Messer Francesco Valori's bitterness and violence which chiefly determined the course of things in the council to-day. Half the men who gave in their opinion against the prisoners were frightened into it, and there are numerous friends of Fra Girolamo both in this Special Council and out of it who are strongly opposed to the sentence of death—Piero Guicciardini, for example, who is one member of the Signoria that made the stoutest resistance; and there is Giovan Battista Ridolfi, who, Piagnone as he is, will not lightly forgive the death of his brother Niccolò.”

“But how can the appeal be denied,” said Romola, indignantly, “when it is the law—when it was one of the chief glories of the popular government to have passed the law?”

“They call this an exceptional case. Of course there are ingenious arguments, but there is much more of loud bluster about the danger of the Republic. But, you see, no opposition could prevent the assembly from being prorogued, and a certain powerful influence rightly applied during the next three days might determine the wavering courage of those who desire that the Appeal should be granted, and might even give a check to the headlong enmity of Francesco Valori. It happens to have come to my knowledge that the Frate has so far interfered as to send a message to him in favor of Lorenzo Tornabuoni. I know you can sometimes have access to the Frate: it might at all events be worth while to use your privilege now.”

"It is true," said Romola, with an air of abstraction. "I cannot believe that the Frate would approve denying the Appeal."

"I heard it said by more than one person in the court of the Palazzo, before I came away, that it would be to the everlasting discredit of Fra Girolamo if he allowed a government which is almost entirely made up of his party, to deny the Appeal, without entering his protest, when he has been boasting in his books and sermons that it was he who got the law passed.* But between ourselves, with all respect for your Frate's ability, my Romola, he has got into the practice of preaching that form of human sacrifices called killing tyrants and wicked malcontents, which some of his followers are likely to think inconsistent with lenity in the present case."

"I know, I know," said Romola, with a look and tone of pain. "But he is driven into those excesses of speech. It used to be different. I *will* ask for an interview. I cannot rest without it. I trust in the greatness of his heart."

She was not looking at Tito; her eyes were bent with a vague gaze toward the ground, and she had no distinct consciousness that the words she heard came from her husband.

"Better lose no time, then," said Tito, with unmixed suavity, moving his cap round in his hands as if he were about to put it on and depart. "And now, Romola, you will perhaps be able to see, in spite of prejudice, that my wishes go with yours in this matter. You will not regard the misfortune of my safety as an offense."

Something like an electric shock passed through Romola: it was the full consciousness of her husband's presence returning to her. She looked at him without speaking.

"At least," he added, in a slightly harder tone, "you will endeavor to base our intercourse on some other reasonings than that because an evil deed is possible, *I* have done it. Am I alone to be beyond the pale of your extensive charity?"

* The most recent, and in some respects the best, biographer of Savonarola, Signor Villari, endeavors to show that the Law of Appeal ultimately enacted, being wider than the law originally contemplated by Savonarola, was a source of bitter annoyance to him, as a contrivance of the aristocratic party for attaching to the measures of the popular government the injurious results of license. But in taking this view the estimable biographer lost sight of the fact that, not only in his sermons, but in a deliberately prepared book (the *Compendium Revelationum*), written long after the Appeal had become law, Savonarola enumerates among the benefits secured to Florence, "*the Appeal from the Six Votes, advocated by me, for the greater security of the citizens.*"

The feeling which had been driven back from Romola's lips a fortnight before rose again with the gathered force of a tidal wave. She spoke with a decision which told him that she was careless of consequences.

"It is too late, Tito. There is no killing the suspicion that deceit has once begotten. And now I know everything. I know who that old man was: he was your father, to whom you owe everything—to whom you owe more than if you had been his own child. By the side of that, it is a small thing that you broke my trust and my father's. As long as you deny the truth about that old man, there is a horror rising between us: the law that should make us one can never be obeyed. I too am a human being. I have a soul of my own that abhors your actions. Our union is a pretense—as if a perpetual lie could be a sacred marriage."

Tito did not answer immediately. When he did speak it was with a calculated caution, that was stimulated by alarm.

"And you mean to carry out that independence by quitting me, I presume?"

"I desire to quit you," said Romola, impetuously.

"And supposing I do not submit to part with what the law gives me some security for retaining? You will then, of course, proclaim your reasons in the ear of all Florence. You will bring forward your mad assassin, who is doubtless ready to obey your call, and you will tell the world that you believe his testimony because he is so rational as to desire to assassinate me. You will first inform the Signoria that I am a Medicean conspirator, and then you will inform the Mediceans that I have betrayed them, and in both cases you will offer the excellent proof that you believe me capable in general of everything bad. It will certainly be a striking position for a wife to adopt. And if, on such evidence, you succeed in holding me up to infamy, you will have surpassed all the heroines of the Greek drama."

He paused a moment, but she stood mute. He went on with the sense of mastery.

"I believe you have no other grievance against me—except that I have failed in fulfilling some lofty indefinite conditions on which you gave me your wifely affection, so that, by withdrawing it, you have gradually reduced me to the careful supply of your wants as a fair Piagnone of high condition and liberal charities. I think your success

in gibbeting me is not certain. But doubtless you would begin by winning the ear of Messer Bernardo del Nero?"

"Why do I speak of anything?" cried Romola, in anguish, sinking on her chair again. "It is hateful in me to be thinking of myself."

She did not notice when Tito left the room, or know how long it was before the door opened to admit Monna Brigida. But in that instant she started up and said —

"Cousin, we must go to San Marco directly. I must see my confessor, Fra Salvestro."

CHAPTER LIX.

PLEADING.

THE morning was in its early brightness when Romola was again on her way to San Marco, having obtained through Fra Salvestro, the evening before, the promise of an interview with Fra Girolamo in the chapter-house of the convent. The rigidity with which Savonarola guarded his life from all the pretexts of calumny made such interviews very rare, and whenever they were granted, they were kept free from any appearance of mystery. For this reason the hour chosen was one at which there were likely to be other visitors in the outer cloisters of San Marco.

She chose to pass through the heart of the city that she might notice the signs of public feeling. Every loggia, every convenient corner of the piazza, every shop that made a rendezvous for gossips, was astir with the excitement of gratuitous debate; a languishing trade tending to make political discussion all the more vigorous. It was clear that the parties for and against the death of the conspirators were bent on making the fullest use of the three days' interval in order to determine the popular mood. Already handbills were in circulation; some presenting, in large print, the alternative of justice on the conspirators or ruin to the Republic; others in equally large print urging the observance of the law and the granting of the Appeal. Round these jutting islets of black capitals there were lakes of smaller characters setting forth arguments less necessary to be read: for it was an opinion entertained at that time (in the first flush of triumph at the discovery of printing),

that there was no argument more widely-convincing than question-begging phrases in large type.

Romola, however, cared especially to become acquainted with the arguments in smaller type, and, though obliged to hasten forward, she looked round anxiously as she went that she might miss no opportunity of securing copies. For a long way she saw none but such as were in the hands of eager readers, or else fixed on the walls, from which in some places the sbirri were tearing them down. But at last, passing behind San Giovanni with a quickened pace that she might avoid the many acquaintances who frequented the piazza, she saw Bratti with a stock of handbills which he appeared to be exchanging for small coin with the passers-by. She was too familiar with the humble life of Florence for Bratti to be any stranger to her, and turning toward him she said, "Have you two sorts of handbills, Bratti? Let me have them quickly."

"Two sorts," said Bratti, separating the wet sheets with a slowness that tried Romola's patience. "There's 'Law,' and there's 'Justice.'"

"Which sort do you sell most of?"

"'Justice'—'Justice' goes the quickest—so I raised the price, and made it two danari. But then I bethought me the 'Law' was good ware, too, and had as good a right to be charged for as 'Justice'; for people set no store by cheap things, and if I sold the 'Law' at one danaro, I should be doing it a wrong. And I'm a fair trader. 'Law,' or 'Justice,' it's all one to me; they're good wares. I got 'em both for nothing, and I sell 'em at a fair profit. But you'll want more than one of a sort?"

"No, no; here's a white quattrino for the two," said Romola, folding up the bills and hurrying away.

She was soon in the outer cloisters of San Marco, where Fra Salvestro was awaiting her under the cloister, but did not notice the approach of her light step. He was chatting, according to his habit, with lay visitors; for under the auspices of a government friendly to the Frate, the timidity about frequenting San Marco, which had followed on the first shock of the Excommunication, had been gradually giving way. In one of these lay visitors she recognized a well-known satellite of Francesco Valori, named Andrea Cambini, who was narrating or expounding with emphatic gesticulation, while Fra Salvestro was listening with that air of trivial curiosity which tells that the listener cares very much about news and very little about its quality. This

characteristic of her confessor, which was always repulsive to Romola, was made exasperating to her at this moment by the certainty she gathered, from the disjointed words which reached her ear, that Cambini was narrating something relative to the fate of the conspirators. She chose not to approach the group, but as soon as she saw that she had arrested Fra Salvestro's attention, she turned toward the door of the chapter-house, while he, making a sign of approval, disappeared within the inner cloister. A lay Brother stood ready to open the door of the chapter-house for her, and closed it behind her as she entered.

Once more looked at by those sad frescoed figures which had seemed to be mourning with her at the death of her brother Dino, it was inevitable that something of that scene should come back to her; but the intense occupation of her mind with the present made the remembrance less a retrospect than an indistinct recurrence of impressions which blended themselves with her agitating fears, as if her actual anxiety were a revival of the strong yearning she had once before brought to this spot—to be repelled by marble rigidity. She gave no space for the remembrance to become more definite, for she at once opened the handbills, thinking she should perhaps be able to read them in the interval before Fra Girolamo appeared. But by the time she had read to the end of the one that recommended the observance of the law, the door was opening, and doubling up the papers she stood expectant.

When the Frate had entered she knelt, according to the usual practice of those who saw him in private; but as soon as he had uttered a benedictory greeting she rose and stood opposite to him at a few yards' distance. Owing to his seclusion since he had been excommunicated, it had been an unusually long while since she had seen him, and the late months had visibly deepened in his face the marks of over-taxed mental activity and bodily severities; and yet Romola was not so conscious of this change as of another, which was less definable. Was it that the expression of serene elevation and pure human fellowship which had once moved her was no longer present in the same force, or was it that the sense of his being divided from her in her feeling about her godfather roused the slumbering sources of alienation, and marred her own vision? Perhaps both causes were at work. Our relations with our fellow-men are most often determined by coincident currents of that sort; the inexcusable word or deed seldom

comes until after affection or reverence has been already enfeebled by the strain of repeated excuses.

It was true that Savonarola's glance at Romola had something of that hardness which is caused by an egotistic prepossession. He divined that the interview which she had sought was to turn on the fate of the conspirators, a subject on which he had already had to quell inner voices that might become loud again when encouraged from without. Seated in his cell, correcting the sheets of his "Triumph of the Cross," it was easier to repose on a resolution of neutrality.

"It is a question of moment, doubtless, on which you wish to see me, my daughter," he began, in a tone which was gentle rather from self-control than from immediate inclination. "I know you are not wont to lay stress on small matters."

"Father, you know what it is before I tell you," said Romola, forgetting everything else as soon as she began to pour forth her plea. "You know what I am caring for—it is for the life of the old man I love best in the world. The thought of him has gone together with the thought of my father as long as I remember the daylight. That is my warrant for coming to you, even if my coming should have been needless. Perhaps it is: perhaps you have already determined that your power over the hearts of men shall be used to prevent them from denying to Florentines a right which you yourself helped to earn for them."

"I meddle not with the functions of the State, my daughter," said Fra Girolamo, strongly disinclined to reopen externally a debate which he had already gone through inwardly. "I have preached and labored that Florence should have a good government, for a good government is needful to the perfecting of the Christian life; but I keep away my hands from particular affairs which it is the office of experienced citizens to administer."

"Surely, father——" Romola broke off. She had uttered this first word almost impetuously, but she was checked by the counter-agitation of feeling herself in an attitude of remonstrance toward the man who had been the source of guidance and strength to her. In the act of rebelling she was bruising her own reverence.

Savonarola was too keen not to divine something of the conflict that was arresting her—too noble, deliberately to assume in calm speech that self-justifying evasiveness into

which he was often hurried in public by the crowding impulses of the orator.

"Say what is in your heart; speak on, my daughter," he said, standing with his arms laid one upon the other, and looking at her with quiet expectation.

"I was going to say, father, that this matter is surely of higher moment than many about which I have heard you preach and exhort fervidly. If it belonged to you to urge that men condemned for offenses against the State should have the right to appeal to the Great Council—if—" Romola was getting eager again—"if you count it a glory to have won that right for them, can it less belong to you to declare yourself against the right being denied to almost the first men who need it? Surely that touches the Christian life more closely than whether you knew beforehand that the Dauphin would die, or whether Pisa will be conquered."

There was a subtle movement, like a subdued sign of pain in Savonarola's strong lips, before he began to speak.

"My daughter, I speak as it is given me to speak—I am not master of the times when I may become the vehicle of knowledge beyond the common lights of men. In this case I have no illumination beyond what wisdom may give to those who are charged with the safety of the State. As to the law of Appeal against the Six Votes, I labored to have it passed in order that no Florentine should be subject to loss of life and goods through the private hatred of a few who might happen to be in power; but these five men, who have desired to overthrow a free government and restore a corrupt tyrant, have been condemned with the assent of a large assembly of their fellow-citizens. They refused at first to have their cause brought before the Great Council. They have lost the right to the appeal."

"How can they have lost it?" said Romola. "It is the right to appeal against condemnation, and they have never been condemned till now; and, forgive me, father, it *is* private hatred that would deny them the appeal; it *is* the violence of the few that frightens others; else why was the assembly divided again directly after it had seemed to agree? And if anything weighs against the observance of the law, let this weigh *for* it—this, that you used to preach more earnestly than all else, that there should be no place given to hatred and bloodshed because of these party strifes, so that private ill-will should not find its oppor-

tunities in public acts. Father, you *know* that there is private hatred concerned here: will it not dishonor you not to have interposed on the side of mercy, when there are many who hold that it is also the side of law and justice?"

"My daughter," said Fra Girolamo, with more visible emotion than before, "there is a mercy which is weakness, and even treason against the common good. The safety of Florence, which means even more than the welfare of Florentines, now demands severity, as it once demanded mercy. It is not only for a past plot that these men are condemned, but also for a plot which has not yet been executed; and the devices that are leading to its execution are not put an end to: the tyrant is still gathering his forces in Romagna, and the enemies of Florence, who sit in the highest places of Italy, are ready to hurl any stone that will crush her."

"What plot?" said Romola, reddening, and trembling with alarmed surprise.

"You carry papers in your hand, I see," said Fra Girolamo, pointing to the handbills. "One of them will, perhaps, tell you that the government has had new information."

Romola hastily opened the handbill she had not yet read, and saw that the government had now positive evidence of a second plot, which was to have been carried out in this August time. To her mind it was like reading a confirmation that Tito had won his safety by foul means; his pretense of wishing that the Frate should exert himself on behalf of the condemned only helped the wretched conviction. She crushed up the paper in her hand, and, turning to Savonarola, she said, with new passion, "Father, what safety can there be for Florence when the worst man can always escape? And," she went on, a sudden flash of remembrance coming from the thought about her husband, "have you not yourself encouraged this deception which corrupts the life of Florence, by wanting more favor to be shown to Lorenzo Tornabuoni, who has worn two faces, and flattered you with a show of affection, when my godfather has always been honest? Ask all Florence who of those five men has the truest heart, and there will not be many who will name any other name than Bernardo del Nero. You did interpose with Francesco Valori for the sake of one prisoner: you have *not* then been neutral; and you know that your word will be powerful."

"I do not desire the death of Bernardo," said Savonarola, coloring deeply. "It would be enough if he were sent out of the city."

"Then why do you not speak to save an old man of seventy-five from dying a death of ignominy—to give him at least the fair chances of the law?" burst out Romola, the impetuosity of her nature so roused that she forgot everything but her indignation. "It is not, that you feel bound to be neutral; else why did you speak for Lorenzo Tornabuoni? You spoke for him because he is more friendly to San Marco; my godfather feigns no friendship. It is not, then, as a Medicean that my godfather is to die; it is as a man you have no love for!"

When Romola paused, with cheeks glowing, and with quivering lips, there was dead silence. As she saw Fra Giralamo standing motionless before her, she seemed to herself to be hearing her own words over again; words that in this echo of consciousness were in strange, painful dissonance with the memories that made part of his presence to her. The moments of silence were expanded by gathering compunction and self-doubt. She had committed sacrilege in her passion. And even the sense that she could retract nothing of her plea, that her mind could not submit itself to Savonarola's negative, made it the more needful to her to satisfy those reverential memories. With a sudden movement toward him she said—

"Forgive me, father; it is pain to me to have spoken those words—yet I cannot help speaking. I am little and feeble compared with you; you brought me light and strength. But I submitted because I felt the proffered strength—because I saw the light. *Now* I cannot see it. Father, you yourself declare that there comes a moment when the soul must have no guide but the voice within it, to tell whether the consecrated thing has sacred virtue. And therefore I must speak."

Savonarola had that readily-roused resentment toward opposition, hardly separable from a power-loving and powerful nature, accustomed to seek great ends that cast a reflected grandeur on the means by which they are sought. His sermons have much of that red flame in them. And if he had been a meaner man his susceptibility might have shown itself in irritation at Romola's accusatory freedom, which was in strong contrast with the deference he habitually received from his disciples. But at this moment his feelings were nullified by the hard strug-

gle which made half the tragedy of his life—the struggle of a mind possessed by a never-silent hunger after purity and simplicity, yet caught in a tangle of egoistic demands, false ideas, and difficult outward conditions, that made simplicity impossible. Keenly alive to all the suggestions of Romola's remonstrating words; he was rapidly surveying, as he had done before, the courses of action that were open to him, and their probable results. But it was a question on which arguments could seem decisive only in proportion as they were charged with feeling, and he had received no impulse that could alter his bias. He looked at Romola, and said—

“You have full pardon for your frankness, my daughter. You speak, I know, out of the fullness of your family affection. But these affections must give way to the needs of the Republic. If those men who have a close acquaintance with the affairs of the State believe, as I understand they do, that the public safety requires the extreme punishment of the law to fall on the five conspirators, I cannot control their opinion, seeing that I stand aloof from such affairs.”

“Then you desire that they should die? You desire that the Appeal should be denied them?” said Romola, feeling anew repelled by a vindication which seemed to her to have the nature of a subterfuge.

“I have said that I do not desire their death.”

“Then,” said Romola, her indignation rising again, “you can be indifferent that Florentines should inflict death which you do not desire, when you might have protested against it—when you might have helped to hinder it, by urging the observance of a law which you held it good to get passed. Father, you used not to stand aloof: you used not to shrink from protesting. Do not say you cannot protest where the lives of men are concerned; say rather, you desire their death. Say rather, you hold it good for Florence that there shall be more blood and more hatred. Will the death of five Mediceans put an end to parties in Florence? Will the death of a noble old man like Bernardo del Nero save a city that holds such men as Dolfo Spini?”

“My daughter, it is enough. The cause of freedom, which is the cause of God's kingdom upon earth, is often most injured by the enemies who carry within them the power of certain human virtues. The wickedest man

is often not the most insurmountable obstacle to the triumph of good."

"Then why do you say again, that you do not desire my godfather's death?" said Romola, in mingled anger and despair. "Rather, you hold it the more needful he should die because he is the better man. I cannot unravel your thoughts, father; I cannot hear the real voice of your judgment and conscience."

There was a moment's pause. Then Savonarola said, with keener emotion than he had yet shown—

"Be thankful, my daughter, if your own soul has been spared perplexity; and judge not those to whom a harder lot has been given. *You* see one ground of action in this matter. I see many. I have to choose that which will further the work intrusted to me. The end I seek is one to which minor respects must be sacrificed. The death of five men—were they less guilty than these—is a light matter weighed against the withstanding of the vicious tyrannies which stifle the life of Italy, and foster the corruption of the Church; a light matter weighed against the furthering of God's kingdom upon earth, the end for which I live and am willing myself to die."

Under any other circumstances, Romola would have been sensitive to the appeal at the beginning of Savonarola's speech; but at this moment she was so utterly in antagonism with him, that what he called perplexity seemed to her sophistry and doubleness; and as he went on, his words only fed that flame of indignation, which now again, more fully than ever before, lit up the memory of all his mistakes, and made her trust in him seem to have been a purblind delusion. She spoke almost with bitterness.

"Do you, then, know so well what will further the coming of God's kingdom, father, that you will dare to despise the plea of mercy—of justice—of faithfulness to your own teaching? Has the French king, then, brought renovation to Italy? Take care, father, lest your enemies have some reason when they say, that in your visions of what will further God's kingdom you see only what will strengthen your own party."

"And that is true!" said Savonarola, with flashing eyes. Romola's voice had seemed to him in that moment the voice of his enemies. "The cause of my party is the cause of God's kingdom."

"I do not believe it!" said Romola, her whole frame shaken with passionate repugnance. "God's kingdom is

something wider—else, let me stand outside it with the beings that I love.”

The two faces were lit up, each with an opposite emotion, each with an opposite certitude. Further words were impossible. Romola hastily covered her head and went out in silence.

CHAPTER LX.

THE SCAFFOLD.

THREE days later the moon that was just surmounting the buildings of the piazza in front of the Old Palace within the hour of midnight, did not make the usual broad lights and shadows on the pavement. Not a hand's-breadth of pavement was to be seen, but only the heads of an eager struggling multitude. And instead of that background of silence in which the pattering footsteps and buzzing voices, the lute-thrumming or rapid scampering of the many night wanderers of Florence stood out in obtrusive distinctness, there was the background of a roar from mingled shouts and imprecations, trappings and pushings, and accidental clashing of weapons, across which nothing was distinguishable but a darting shriek, or the heavy dropping toll of a bell.

Almost all who could call themselves the public of Florence were awake at that hour, and either enclosed within the limits of that piazza, or struggling to enter it. Within the palace were still assembled in the council chamber all the chief magistracies, the eighty members of the senate, and the other select citizens who had been in hot debate through long hours of daylight and torchlight whether the Appeal should be granted or whether the sentence of death should be executed on the prisoners forthwith, to forestall the dangerous chances of delay. And the debate had been so much like fierce quarrel that the noise from the council chamber had reached the crowd outside. Only within the last hour had the question been decided: the Signoria had remained divided, four of them standing out resolutely for the Appeal in spite of the strong argument that if they did not give way their houses should be sacked, until Francesco Valori, in brief and furious speech, made the determina-

tion of his party more ominously distinct by declaring that if the Signoria would not defend the liberties of the Florentine people by executing those five perfidious citizens, there would not be wanting others who would take that cause in hand to the peril of all who opposed it. The Florentine Cato triumphed. When the votes were counted again, the four obstinate white beans no longer appeared; the whole nine were of the fatal affirmative black, deciding the death of the five prisoners without delay—deciding also, only tacitly and with much more delay, the death of Francesco Valori.

And now, while the judicial Eight were gone to the Bargello to prepare for the execution, the five condemned men were being led barefoot and in irons through the midst of the council. It was their friends who had contrived this: would not Florentines be moved by the visible association of such cruel ignominy with two venerable men like Bernardo del Nero and Niccolò Ridolfi, who had taken their bias long before the new order of things had come to make Mediceanism retrograde—with two brilliant popular young men like Tornabuoni and Pucci, whose absence would be felt as a haunting vacancy wherever there was a meeting of chief Florentines? It was useless: such pity as could be awakened now was of that hopeless sort which leads not to rescue, but to the tardier action of revenge.

While this scene was passing up-stairs Romola stood below against one of the massive pillars in the court of the palace, expecting the moment when her godfather would appear, on his way to execution. By the use of strong interest she had gained permission to visit him in the evening of this day, and remain with him until the result of the council should be determined. And now she was waiting with his confessor to follow the guard that would lead him to the Bargello. Her heart was bent on clinging to the presence of the childless old man to the last moment, as her father would have done; and she had overpowered all remonstrances. Giovan Battisto Ridolfi, a disciple of Savonarola, who was going in bitterness to behold the death of his elder brother Niccolò, had promised that she should be guarded, and now stood by her side.

Tito, too, was in the palace; but Romola had not seen him. Since the evening of the seventeenth they had avoided each other, and Tito only knew by inference from

the report of the Frate's neutrality that her pleading had failed. He was now surrounded with official and other personages, both Florentine and foreign, who had been awaiting the issue of the long-protracted council, maintaining, except when he was directly addressed, the subdued air and grave silence of a man whom actual events are placing in a painful state of strife between public and private feeling. When an allusion was made to his wife in relation to those events, he implied that, owing to the violent excitement of her mind, the mere fact of his continuing to hold office under a government concerned in her godfather's condemnation, roused in her a diseased hostility toward him; so that for her sake he felt it best not to approach her.

"Ah, the old Bardi blood!" said Cennini, with a shrug. "I shall not be surprised if this business shakes *her* loose from the Frate, as well as some others I could name."

"It is excusable in a woman, who is doubtless beautiful, since she is the wife of Messer Tito," said a young French envoy, smiling and bowing to Tito, "to think that her affections must overrule the good of the State, and that nobody is to be beheaded who is anybody's cousin; but such a view is not to be encouraged in the male population. It seems to me your Florentine polity is much weakened by it."

"That is true," said Niccolò Macchiavelli; "but where personal ties are strong, the hostilities they raise must be taken due account of. Many of these half-way severities are mere hot-headed blundering. The only safe blows to be inflicted on men and parties are the blows that are too heavy to be avenged."

"Niccolò," said Cennini, "there is a clever wickedness in thy talk sometimes that makes me mistrust thy pleasant young face as if it were a mask of Satan."

"Not at all, my good Domenico," said Macchiavelli, smiling, and laying his hand on the elder's shoulder. "Satan was a blunderer, an introducer of *novità*, who made a stupendous failure. If he had succeeded, we should all have been worshipping him, and his portrait would have been more flattered."

"Well, well," said Cennini, "I say not thy doctrine is not too clever for Satan: I only say it is wicked enough for him."

"I tell you," said Macchiavelli, "my doctrine is the doctrine of all men who seek an end a little farther off than

their own noses. Ask our Frate, our prophet, how his universal renovation is to be brought about: he will tell you, first, by getting a free and pure government; and since it appears that this cannot be done by making all Florentines love each other, it must be done by cutting off every head that happens to be obstinately in the way. Only if a man incurs odium by sanctioning a severity that is not thorough enough to be final, he commits a blunder. And something like that blunder, I suspect, the Frate has committed. It was an occasion on which he might have won some lustre by exerting himself to maintain the Appeal; instead of that, he has lost lustre, and has gained no strength."

Before any one else could speak, there came the expected announcement that the prisoners were about to leave the council chamber, and the majority of those who were present hurried toward the door, intent on securing the freest passage to the Bargello in the rear of the prisoners' guard; for the scene of the execution was one that drew alike those who were moved by the deepest passions and those who were moved by the coldest curiosity.

Tito was one of those who remained behind. He had a native repugnance to sights of death and pain, and five days ago whenever he had thought of this execution as a possibility he had hoped that it would not take place, and that the utmost sentence would be exile: his own safety demanded no more. But now he felt that it would be a welcome guarantee of his security when he had learned that Bernardo del Nero's head was off the shoulders. The new knowledge and new attitude toward him disclosed by Romola on the day of his return, had given him a new dread of the power she possessed to make his position insecure. If any act of hers only succeeded in making him an object of suspicion and odium, he foresaw not only frustration, but frustration under unpleasant circumstances. Her belief in Baldassarre had clearly determined her wavering feelings against further submission, and if her godfather lived she would win him to share her belief without much trouble. Romola seemed more than ever an unmanageable fact in his destiny. But if Bernardo del Nero were dead, the difficulties that would beset her in placing herself in opposition to her husband would probably be insurmountable to her shrinking pride. Therefore Tito had felt easier when he knew that the Eight had gone to the Bargello to order the instant erection of the

scaffold. Four other men—his intimates and confederates—were to die, besides Bernardo del Nero. But a man's own safety is a god that sometimes makes very grim demands. Tito felt them to be grim: even in the pursuit of what was agreeable, this paradoxical life forced upon him the desire for what was disagreeable. But he had had other experience of this sort, and as he heard through the open doorway the shuffle of many feet and the clanking of metal on the stairs, he was able to answer the questions of the young French envoy without showing signs of any other feeling than that of sad resignation to State necessities.

Those sounds fell on Romola as if her power of hearing had been exalted along with every other sensibility of her nature. She needed no arm to support her; she shed no tears. She felt that intensity of life which seems to transcend both grief and joy—in which the mind seems to itself akin to elder forces that wrought out existence before the birth of pleasure and pain. Since her godfather's fate had been decided, the previous struggle of feeling in her had given way to an identification of herself with him in these supreme moments: she was inwardly asserting for him that, if he suffered the punishment of treason, he did not deserve the name of traitor; he was the victim to a collision between two kinds of faithfulness. It was not given him to die for the noblest cause, and yet he died because of his nobleness. He might have been a meaner man and found it easier not to incur this guilt. Romola was feeling the full force of that sympathy with the individual lot that is continually opposing itself to the formulæ by which actions and parties are judged. She was treading the way with her second father to the scaffold, and nerving herself to defy ignominy by the consciousness that it was not deserved.

The way was fenced in by three hundred armed men, who had been placed as a guard by the orders of Francesco Valori, for among the apparent contradictions that belonged to this event, not the least striking was the alleged alarm on the one hand at the popular rage against the conspirators, and the alleged alarm on the other lest there should be an attempt to rescue them in the midst of a hostile crowd. When they had arrived within the court of the Bargello, Romola was allowed to approach Bernardo with his confessor for a moment of farewell. Many eyes were bent on them even in that struggle of an agitated

throng, as the aged man, forgetting that his hands were bound with irons, lifted them toward the golden head that was bent toward him, and then, checking that movement, leaned to kiss her. She seized the fettered hands that were hung down again, and kissed them as if they had been sacred things.

"My poor Romola," said Bernardo, in a low voice, "I have only to die, but thou hast to live—and I shall not be there to help thee."

"Yes," said Romola, hurriedly, "you *will* help me—always—because I shall remember you."

She was taken away and conducted up the flight of steps that led to the loggia surrounding the grand old court. She took her place there, determined to look till the moment when her godfather laid his head on the block. Now while the prisoners were allowed a brief interval with their confessor, the spectators were pressing into court until the crowd became dense around the black scaffold, and the torches fixed in iron rings against the pillars threw a varying startling light at one moment on passionless stone carvings, at another on some pale face agitated with suppressed rage or suppressed grief—the face of one among the many near relatives of the condemned, who were presently to receive their dead and carry them home.

Romola's face looked like a marble image against the dark arch as she stood watching for the moment when her godfather would appear at the foot of the scaffold. He was to suffer first, and Battista Ridolfi, who was by her side, had promised to take her away through a door behind them when she would have seen the last look of the man who alone in all the world had shared her pitying love for her father. And still, in the background of her thought, there was the possibility striving to be a hope, that some rescue might yet come, something that would keep that scaffold unstained by blood.

For a long while there was constant movement, lights flickering, heads swaying to and fro, confused voices within the court, rushing waves of sound through the entrance from without. It seemed to Romola as if she were in the midst of a storm-troubled sea, caring nothing about the storm, caring only to hold out a signal till the eyes that looked for it could seek it no more.

Suddenly there was stillness, and the very tapers seemed to tremble into quiet. The executioner was ready on the scaffold, and Bernardo del Nero was seen ascending it with

a slow firm step. Romola made no visible movement, uttered not even a suppressed sound: she stood more firmly, caring for *his* firmness. She saw him pause, saw the white head kept erect, while he said, in a voice distinctly audible—

“It is but a short space of life that my fellow-citizens have taken from me.”

She perceived that he was gazing slowly round him as he spoke. She felt that his eyes were resting on her, and that she was stretching out her arms toward him. Then she saw no more till—a long while after, as it seemed—a voice said, “My daughter, all is peace now. I can conduct you to your house.”

She uncovered her head, and saw her godfather’s confessor standing by her, in a room where there were other grave men talking in subdued tones.

“I am ready,” she said starting up. “Let us lose no time.”

She thought all clinging was at an end for her: all her strength now should be given to escape from a grasp under which she shuddered.

CHAPTER LXI.

DRIFTING AWAY.

ON the eighth day from that memorable night Romola was standing on the brink of the Mediterranean, watching the gentle summer pulse of the sea just above what was then the little fishing village of Viareggio.

Again she had fled from Florence, and this time no arresting voice had called her back. Again she wore the gray religious dress; and this time, in her heart-sickness, she did not care that it was a disguise. A new rebellion had risen within her, a new despair. Why should she care about wearing one badge more than another, or about being called by her own name? She despaired of finding any consistent duty belonging to that name. What force was there to create for her that supremely hallowed motive which men call duty, but which can have no inward constraining existence save through some form of believing love?

The bonds of all strong affection were snapped. In her marriage, the highest bond of all, she had ceased to see the mystic union which is its own guarantee of indissolubleness, had ceased even to see the obligation of a voluntary pledge: had she not proved that the things to which she had pledged herself were impossible? The impulse to set herself free had risen again with overmastering force: yet the freedom could only be an exchange of calamity. There is no compensation for the woman who feels that the chief relation of her life has been no more than a mistake. She has lost her crown. The deepest secret of human blessedness has half whispered itself to her, and then forever passed her by.

And now Romola's best support under that supreme woman's sorrow had slipped away from her. The vision of any great purpose, any end of existence which could ennoble endurance and exalt the common deeds of a dusty life with divine ardors, was utterly eclipsed for her now by the sense of a confusion in human things which made all effort a mere dragging at tangled threads; all fellowship, either for resistance or advocacy, mere unfairness and exclusiveness. What, after all, was the man who had represented for her the highest heroism: the heroism not of hard, self-contained endurance, but of willing, self-offering love? What was the cause he was struggling for? Romola had lost her trust in Savonarola, had lost that fervor of admiration which had made her unmindful of his aberrations, and attentive only to the grand curve of his orbit. And now that her keen feeling for her godfather had thrown her into antagonism with the Frate, she saw all the repulsive and inconsistent details in his teaching with a painful lucidity which exaggerated their proportions. In the bitterness of her disappointment she said that his striving after the renovation of the Church and the world was a striving after a mere name which told no more than the title of a book: a name that had come to mean practically the measures that would strengthen his own position in Florence; nay, often questionable deeds and words, for the sake of saving his influence from suffering by his own errors. And that political reform which had once made a new interest in her life seemed now to reduce itself to narrow devices for the safety of Florence, in contemptible contradiction with the alternating professions of blind trust in the Divine care.

It was inevitable that she should judge the Frate unfairly

on a question of individual suffering, at which *she* looked with the eyes of personal tenderness, and *he* with the eyes of theoretic conviction. In that declaration of his, that the cause of his party was the cause of God's kingdom, she heard only the ring of egoism. Perhaps such words have rarely been uttered without that meaner ring in them; yet they are the implicit formula of all energetic belief. And if such energetic belief, pursuing a grand and remote end, is often in danger of becoming a demon-worship, in which the votary lets his son and daughter pass through the fire with a readiness that hardly looks like sacrifice: tender fellow-feeling for the nearest has its danger too, and is apt to be timid and skeptical toward the larger aims without which life cannot rise into religion. In this way poor Romola was being blinded by her tears.

No one who has ever known what it is thus to lose faith in a fellow-man whom he has profoundly loved and revered, will lightly say that the shock can leave the faith in the Invisible Goodness unshaken. With the sinking of high human trust, the dignity of life sinks too; we cease to believe in our own better self, since that also is part of the common nature which is degraded in our thought; and all the finer impulses of the soul are dulled. Romola felt even the springs of her once active pity drying up, and leaving her to barren egoistic complaining. Had not *she* had her sorrows too? And few had cared for her, while she had cared for many. She had done enough; she had striven after the impossible, and was weary of this stifling, crowded life. She longed for that repose in mere sensation which she had sometimes dreamed of in the sultry afternoons of her early girlhood, when she had fancied herself floating naiad-like in the waters.

The clear waves seemed to invite her: she wished she could lie down to sleep on them, and pass from sleep into death. But Romola could not directly seek death; the fullness of young life in her forbade that. She could only wish that death would come.

At the spot where she had paused, there was a deep bend in the shore, and a small boat with a sail was moored there. In her longing to glide over the waters that were getting golden with the level sun-rays, she thought of a story which had been one of the things she had loved to dwell on in Boccaccio, when her father fell asleep and she glided from her stool to sit on the floor and read the "Decameron." It was the story of that fair Gostanza, who, in

her love-lornness, desired to live no longer; but, not having the courage to attack her young life, had put herself into a boat and pushed off to sea; then, lying down in the boat, had wrapped her mantle round her head, hoping to be wrecked, so that her fear would be helpless to flee from death. The memory had remained a mere thought in Romola's mind, without budding into any distinct wish; but now, as she paused again in her walking to and fro, she saw gliding black against the red gold another boat with one man in it, making toward the bend where the first and smaller boat was moored. Walking on again, she at length saw the man land, pull his boat ashore and begin to unlade something from it. He was perhaps the owner of the smaller boat also: he would be going away soon, and her opportunity would be gone with him—her opportunity of buying that smaller boat. She had not yet admitted to herself that she meant to use it, but she felt a sudden eagerness to secure the possibility of using it, which disclosed the half-unconscious growth of a thought into a desire.

"Is that little boat yours also?" she said to the fisherman, who had looked up, a little startled by the tall gray figure, and had made a reverence to this holy Sister wandering thus mysteriously in the evening solitude.

It *was* his boat; an old one, hardly seaworthy, yet worth repairing to any man who would buy it. By the blessing of San Antonio, whose chapel was in the village yonder, his fishing had prospered, and he had now a better boat, which had once been Gianni's, who died. But he had not yet sold the old one. Romola asked him how much it was worth, and then, while he was busy, thrust the price into a little sachel lying on the ground and containing the remnant of his dinner. After that, she watched him furling his sail and asked him how he should set it if he wanted to go out to sea, and then pacing up and down again, waited to see him depart.

The imagination of herself gliding away in that boat on the darkening waters was growing more and more into a longing, as the thought of a cool brook in sultriness becomes a painful thirst. To be freed from the burden of choice when all motive was bruised, to commit herself, sleeping, to destiny which would either bring death or else new necessities that might rouse a new life in her!—it was a thought that beckoned her the more because the

soft evening air made her long to rest in the still solitude, instead of going back to the noise and heat of the village.

At last the slow fisherman had gathered up all his movables and was walking away. Soon the gold was shrinking and getting duskier in sea and sky, and there was no living thing in sight, no sound but the lulling monotony of the lapping waves. In this sea there was no tide that would help to carry her away if she waited for its ebb; but Romola thought the breeze from the land was rising a little. She got into the boat, unfurled the sail, and fastened it as she had learned in that first brief lesson. She saw that it caught the light breeze, and this was all she cared for. Then she loosed the boat from its moorings, and tried to urge it with an oar, till she was far out from the land, till the sea was dark even to the west, and the stars were disclosing themselves like a palpitating life over the wide heavens. Resting at last, she threw back her cowl, and, taking off the kerchief underneath, which confined her hair, she doubled them both under her head for a pillow on one of the boat's ribs. The fair head was still very young and could bear a hard pillow.

And so she lay, with the soft night air breathing on her while she glided on the water and watched the deepening quiet of the sky. She was alone now: she had freed herself from all claims, she had freed herself even from that burden of choice which presses with heavier and heavier weight when claims have loosed their guiding hold.

Had she found anything like the dream of her girlhood? No. Memories hung upon her like the weight of broken wings that could never be lifted—memories of human sympathy which even in its pains leaves a thirst that the Great Mother has no milk to still. Romola felt orphaned in those wide spaces of sea and sky. She read no message of love for her in that far-off symbolic writing of the heavens, and with a great sob she wished that she might be gliding into death.

She drew the cowl over her head again and covered her face, choosing darkness rather than the light of the stars, which seemed to her like the hard light of eyes that looked at her without seeing her. Presently she felt that she was in the grave, but not resting there: she was touching the hands of the beloved dead beside her, and trying to wake them.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE BENEDICTION.

ABOUT ten o'clock on the morning of the twenty-seventh of February the currents of passengers along the Florentine streets set decidedly toward San Marco. It was the last morning of the Carnival, and every one knew there was a second Bonfire of Vanities being prepared in front of the Old Palace; but at this hour it was evident that the centre of popular interest lay elsewhere.

The Piazza di San Marco was filled by a multitude who showed no other movement than that which proceeded from the pressure of new-comers trying to force their way forward from all the openings: but the front ranks were already close-serried and resisted the pressure. Those ranks were ranged around a semicircular barrier in front of the church, and within this barrier were already assembling the Dominican Brethren of San Marco.

But the temporary wooden pulpit erected over the church-door was still empty. It was presently to be entered by the man whom the Pope's command had banished from the pulpit of the Duomo, whom the other ecclesiastics of Florence had been forbidden to consort with, whom the citizens had been forbidden to hear on pain of excommunication. This man had said, "A wicked, unbelieving Pope, who has gained the pontifical chair by bribery is not Christ's Vicar. His curses are broken swords: he grasps a hilt without a blade. His commands are contrary to the Christian life: it is lawful to disobey them—nay, *it is not lawful to obey them.*" And the people still flocked to hear him as he preached in his own church of San Marco, though the Pope was hanging terrible threats over Florence if it did not renounce the pestilential schismatic and send him to Rome to be "converted"—still, as on this very morning, accepted the Communion from his excommunicated hands. For how if this Frate had really more command over the Divine lightnings than that official successor of Saint Peter? It was a momentous question, which for the mass of citizens could never be decided by the Frate's ultimate test, namely, what was and what was not accordant with the highest spiritual law. No: in such a case as this, if God had chosen the Frate as his prophet to rebuke the

High Priest who carried the mystic raiment unworthily, he would attest his choice by some unmistakable sign. As long as the belief in the Prophet carried no threat of outward calamity, but rather the confident hope of exceptional safety, no sign was needed: his preaching was a music to which the people felt themselves marching along the way they wished to go; but now that belief meant an immediate blow to their commerce, the shaking of their position among the Italian States, and an interdict on their city, there inevitably came the question, "What miracle showest thou?" Slowly at first, then faster and faster, that fatal demand had been swelling in Savonarola's ear, provoking a response, outwardly in the declaration that at the fitting time the miracle would come; inwardly in the faith—not unwavering, for what faith is so?—that if the need for miracle became urgent, the work he had before him was too great for the Divine power to leave it halting. His faith wavered, but not his speech: it is the lot of every man who has to speak for the satisfaction of the crowd, that he must often speak in virtue of yesterday's faith, hoping it will come back to-morrow.

It was in preparation for a scene which was really a response to the popular impatience for some supernatural guarantee of the Prophet's mission, that the wooden pulpit had been erected above the church-door. But while the ordinary Frati in black mantles were entering and arranging themselves, the faces of the multitude were not yet eagerly directed toward the pulpit: it was felt that Savonarola would not appear just yet, and there was some interest in singling out the various monks, some of them belonging to high Florentine families, many of them having fathers, brothers, or cousins among the artisans and shopkeepers who made the majority of the crowd. It was not till the tale of monks was complete, not till they had fluttered their books and had begun to chant, that people said to each other, "Fra Girolamo must be coming now."

That expectation rather than any spell from the accustomed wail of psalmody was what made silence and expectation seem to spread like a paling solemn light over the multitude of upturned faces, all now directed toward the empty pulpit.

The next instant the pulpit was no longer empty. A figure covered from head to foot in black cowl and mantle had entered it, and was kneeling with bent head and with

face turned away. It seemed a weary time to the eager people while the black figure knelt and the monks chanted. But the stillness was not broken, for the Frate's audiences with Heaven were yet charged with electric awe for that mixed multitude, so that those who had already the will to stone him felt their arms unnerved.

At last there was a vibration among the multitude, each seeming to give his neighbor a momentary aspen-like touch, as when men who have been watching for something in the heavens see the expected presence silently disclosing itself. The Frate had risen, turned toward the people, and partly pushed back his cowl. The monotonous wail of psalmody had ceased, and to those who stood near the pulpit, it was as if the sounds which had just been filling their ears had suddenly merged themselves in the force of Savonarola's flashing glance, as he looked round him in the silence. Then he stretched out his hands, which, in their exquisite delicacy, seemed transfigured from an animal organ for grasping into vehicles of sensibility too acute to need any gross contact: hands that came like an appealing speech from that part of his soul which was masked by his strong passionate face, written on now with deeper lines about the mouth and brow than are made by forty-four years of ordinary life.

At the first stretching out of the hands some of the crowd in the front ranks fell on their knees, and here and there a devout disciple farther off; but the great majority stood firm, some resisting the impulse to kneel before this excommunicated man (might not a great judgment fall upon him even in this act of blessing?)—others jarred with scorn and hatred of the ambitious deceiver who was getting up this new comedy, before which, nevertheless, they felt themselves impotent, as before the triumph of a fashion.

But then came the voice, clear and low at first, uttering the words of absolution—"Misereatur vestri"—and more fell on their knees: and as it rose higher and yet clearer, the erect heads became fewer and fewer, till, at the words "*Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus*," it rose to a masculine cry, as if protesting its power to bless under the clutch of a demon that wanted to stifle it: it rang like a trumpet to the extremities of the Piazza, and under it every head was bowed.

After the utterance of that blessing, Savonarola himself fell on his knees and hid his face in temporary exhaustion.

Those great jets of emotion were a necessary part of his life; he himself had said to the people long ago, "Without preaching I cannot live." But it was a life that shattered him.

In a few minutes more, some had risen to their feet, but a larger number remained kneeling, and all faces were intently watching him. He had taken into his hands a crystal vessel, containing the consecrated Host, and was about to address the people.

"You remember, my children, three days ago I besought you, when I should hold this Sacrament in my hand in the face of you all, to pray fervently to the Most High that if this work of mine does not come from Him, He will send a fire and consume me, that I may vanish into the eternal darkness away from His light which I have hidden with my falsity. Again I beseech you to make that prayer, and to make it *now*."

It was a breathless moment: perhaps no man really prayed, if some in a spirit of devout obedience made the effort to pray. Every consciousness was chiefly possessed by the sense that Savonarola was praying, in a voice not loud, but distinctly audible in the wide stillness.

"Lord, if I have not wrought in sincerity of soul, if my word cometh not from Thee, strike me in this moment with Thy thunder, and let the fires of Thy wrath enclose me."

He ceased to speak, and stood motionless, with the consecrated Mystery in his hand, with eyes uplifted and a quivering excitement in his whole aspect. Every one else was motionless and silent too, while the sunlight, which for the last quarter of an hour had here and there been piercing the grayness, made fitful streaks across the convent wall, causing some awe-stricken spectators to start timidly. But soon there was a wider parting, and with a gentle quickness, like a smile, a stream of brightness poured itself on the crystal vase, and then spread itself over Savonarola's face with mild glorification.

An instantaneous shout rang through the Piazza, "Behold the answer!"

The warm radiance thrilled through Savonarola's frame, and so did the shout. It was his last moment of untroubled triumph, and in its rapturous confidence he felt carried to a grander scene yet to come, before an audience that would represent all Christendom, in whose presence he should again be sealed as the messenger of the supreme

righteousness, and feel himself full charged with Divine strength. It was but a moment that expanded itself in that prevision. While the shout was still ringing in his ears he turned away within the church, feeling the strain too great for him to bear it longer.

But when the Frate had disappeared, and the sunlight seemed no longer to have anything special in its illumination, but was spreading itself impartially over all things clean and unclean, there began, along with the general movement of the crowd, a confusion of voices in which certain strong discords and varying scales of laughter made it evident that, in the previous silence and universal kneeling, hostility and scorn had only submitted unwillingly to a momentary spell.

"It seems to me the plaudits are giving way to criticism," said Tito, who had been watching the scene attentively from an upper loggia in one of the houses opposite the church. "Nevertheless it was a striking moment, eh, Messer Pietro? Fra Girolamo is a man to make one understand that there was a time when the monk's frock was a symbol of power over men's minds rather than over the keys of women's cupboards."

"Assuredly," said Pietro Cennini. "And until I have seen proof that Fra Girolamo has much less faith in God's judgments than the common run of men, instead of having considerably more, I shall not believe that he would brave Heaven in this way if his soul were laden with a conscious lie."

CHAPTER LXIII.

RIPENING SCHEMES.

A MONTH after that Carnival, one morning near the end of March, Tito descended the marble steps of the Old Palace, bound on a pregnant errand to San Marco. For some reason, he did not choose to take the direct road, which was but a slightly-bent line from the Old Palace; he chose rather to make a circuit by the Piazza di Santa Croce, where the people would be pouring out of the church after the early sermon.

It was in the grand church of Santa Croce that the daily Lenten sermon had of late had the largest audience. For

Savonarola's voice had ceased to be heard even in his own church of San Marco, a hostile Signoria having imposed silence on him in obedience to a new letter from the Pope, threatening the city with an immediate interdict if this "wretched worm" and "monstrous idol" were not forbidden to preach, and sent to demand pardon at Rome. And next to hearing Fra Girolamo himself, the most exciting Lenten occupation was to hear him argued against and vilified. This excitement was to be had in Santa Croce, where the Franciscan appointed to preach the Quaresimal sermons had offered to clench his arguments by walking through the fire with Fra Girolamo. Had not that schismatical Dominican said that his prophetic doctrine would be proved by a miracle at the fitting time? Here, then, was the fitting time. Let Savonarola walk through the fire, and if he came out unhurt, the Divine origin of his doctrine would be demonstrated; but if the fire consumed him, his falsity would be manifest; and that he might have no excuse for evading the test, the Franciscan declared himself willing to be a victim to this high logic, and to be burned for the sake of securing the necessary minor premise.

Savonarola, according to his habit, had taken no notice of these pulpit attacks. But it happened that the zealous preacher of Santa Croce was no other than the Fra Francesco di Puglia, who at Prato the year before had been engaged in a like challenge with Savonarola's fervent follower, Fra Domenico, but had been called home by his superiors while the heat was simply oratorical. Honest Fra Domenico, then, who was preaching Lenten sermons to the women in the Via del Cocomero, no sooner heard of this new challenge than he took up the gauntlet for his master, and declared himself ready to walk through the fire with Fra Francesco. Already the people were beginning to take a strong interest in what seemed to them a short and easy method of argument (for those who were to be convinced), when Savonarola, keenly alive to the dangers that lay in the mere discussion of the case, commanded Fra Domenico to withdraw his acceptance of the challenge and secede from the affair. The Franciscan declared himself content: he had not directed his challenge to any subaltern, but to Fra Girolamo himself.

After that the popular interest in the Lenten sermons had flagged a little. But this morning, when Tito entered the Piazza di Santa Croce, he found, as he expected, that

the people were pouring from the church in large numbers. Instead of dispersing, many of them concentrated themselves toward a particular spot near the entrance of the Franciscan monastery, and Tito took the same direction, threading the crowd with a careless and leisurely air, but keeping careful watch on that monastic entrance, as if he expected some object of interest to issue from it.

It was no such expectation that occupied the crowd. The object they were caring about was already visible to them in the shape of a large placard, affixed by order of the Signoria, and covered with very legible official handwriting. But curiosity was somewhat balked by the fact that the manuscript was chiefly in Latin, and though nearly every man knew beforehand approximately what the placard contained, he had an appetite for more exact knowledge, which gave him an irritating sense of his neighbor's ignorance in not being able to interpret the learned tongue. For that aural acquaintance with Latin phrases which the unlearned might pick up from pulpit quotations constantly interpreted by the preacher could help them little when they saw written Latin; the spelling even of the modern language being in an unorganized and scrambling condition for the mass of people who could read and write,* while the majority of those assembled nearest to the placard were not in the dangerous predicament of possessing that little knowledge.

"It's the Frate's doctrines that he's to prove by being burned," said that large public character Goro, who happened to be among the foremost gazers. "The Signoria has taken it in hand, and the writing is to let us know. It's what the Padre has been telling us about in his sermon."

"Nay, Goro," said a sleek shopkeeper, compassionately, "thou hast got thy legs into twisted hose there. The Frate has to prove his doctrines by *not* being burned: he is to walk through the fire, and come out on the other side sound and whole."

"Yes, yes," said a young sculptor, who wore his white-streaked cap and tunic with a jaunty air. "But Fra Girolamo objects to walking through the fire. Being sound and whole already, he sees no reason why he should walk through the fire to come out in just the same con-

* The old diarists throw in their consonants with a regard rather to quantity than position, well typified by the *Ragnolo Braghiello* (Agnolo Gabriello) of Boccaccio's *Ferondo*.

dition. He leaves such odds and ends of work to Fra Domenico."

"Then I say he flinches like a coward," said Goro, in a wheezy treble. "Suffocation! that was what he did at the Carnival. He had us all in the Piazza to see the lightning strike him, and nothing came of it."

"Stop that bleating," said a tall shoemaker, who had stepped in to hear part of the sermon, with bunches of slippers hanging over his shoulders. "It seems to me, friend, that you are about as wise as a calf with water on its brain. The Frate will flinch from nothing: he'll say nothing beforehand, perhaps, but when the moment comes he'll walk through the fire without asking any gray-frock to keep him company. But I would give a shoestring to know what this Latin all is."

"There's so much of it," said the shopkeeper, "else I'm pretty good at guessing. Is there no scholar to be seen?" he added, with a slight expression of disgust.

There are a general turning of heads, which caused the talkers to descrier Tito approaching in their rear.

"Here is one," said the young sculptor, smiling and raising his cap.

"It is the secretary of the Ten: he is going to the convent, doubtless; make way for him," said the shopkeeper, also doffing, though that mark of respect was rarely shown by Florentines except to the highest officials. The exceptional reverence was really exacted by the splendor and grace of Tito's appearance, which made his black mantle, with its gold fibula, look like a regal robe, and his ordinary black velvet cap like an entirely exceptional head-dress. The hardening of his cheeks and mouth, which was the chief change in his face since he came to Florence, seemed to a superficial glance only to give his beauty a more masculine character. He raised his own cap immediately and said—

"Thanks, my friend, I merely wished, as you did, to see what is at the foot of this placard—ah, it is as I expected. I had been informed that the government permits any one who will, to subscribe his name as a candidate to enter the fire—which is an act of liberality worthy of the magnificent Signoria—reserving of course the right to make a selection. And doubtless many believers will be eager to subscribe their names. For what is it to enter the fire, to one whose faith is firm? A man is afraid of the fire, because he believes it will burn him; but if he believes the con-

trary?"—here Tito lifted his shoulders and made an oratorical pause—"for which reason I have never been one to disbelieve the Frate, when he said that he would enter the fire to prove his doctrine. For in his place, if you believed the fire would not burn you, which of you, my friends, would not enter it as readily as you would walk along the dry bed of the Mugnone?"

As Tito looked round him during this appeal, there was a change in some of his audience very much like the change in an eager dog when he is invited to smell something pungent. Since the question of burning was becoming practical, it was not every one who would rashly commit himself to any general view of the relation between faith and fire. The scene might have been too much for a gravity less under command than Tito's.

"Then, Messer Segretario," said the young sculptor, "it seems to me Fra Francesco is the greater hero, for he offers to enter the fire for the truth, though he is sure the fire will burn him."

"I do not deny it," said Tito, blandly. "But if it turns out that Fra Francesco is mistaken, he will have been burned for the wrong side, and the Church has never reckoned such victims to be martyrs. We must suspend our judgment until the trial has really taken place."

"It is true, Messer Segretario," said the shopkeeper, with subdued impatience. "But will you favor us by interpreting the Latin?"

"Assuredly," said Tito, "It does not express the conclusions or doctrines which the Frate specially teaches, and which the trial by fire is to prove true or false. They are doubtless familiar to you. First, that Florence——"

"Let us have the Latin bit by bit, and then tell us what it means," said the shoemaker, who had been a frequent hearer of Fra Girolamo.

"Willingly," said Tito, smiling. "You will then judge if I give you the right meaning."

"Yes, yes; that's fair," said Goro.

"*Ecclesia Dei indiget renovatione*; that is the Church of God needs purifying or regeneration."

"It is true," said several voices at once.

"That means, the priests ought to lead better lives; there needs no miracle to prove that. That's what the Frate has always been saying," said the shoemaker.

"*Flagellabitur*," Tito went on. "That is, it will be scourged. *Renovabitur*: it will be purified. *Florentia*

quoque post flagellam renovabitur et prosperabitur: Florence, also, after the scourging, shall be purified and shall prosper."

"That means we are to get Pisa again," said the shopkeeper.

"And get the wool from England as we used to do, I should hope," said an elderly man, in an old-fashioned berretta, who had been silent till now. "There's been scourging enough with the sinking of the trade."

At this moment, a tall personage, surmounted by a red feather, issued from the door of the convent, and exchanged an indifferent glance with Tito, who, tossing his beccetto carelessly over his left shoulder, turned to his reading again, while the bystanders, with more timidity than respect, shrank to make a passage for Messer Dolfo Spini.

"Infideles convertentur ad Christum," Tito went on. "That is, the infidels shall be converted to Christ."

"Those are the Turks and the Moors. Well, I've nothing to say against that," said the shopkeeper, dispassionately.

"Hæc autem omnia erunt temporibus nostris: and all these things shall happen in our times."

"Why, what use would they be else?" said Goro.

"Excommunicatio nuper lata contra Reverendum Patrem nostrum Fratrem Hieronymum nulla est: the excommunication lately pronounced against our reverend father, Fra Girolamo, is null. *Non observantes eam non peccant:* those who disregard it are not committing a sin."

"I shall know better what to say to that when we have had the Trial by Fire," said the shopkeeper.

"Which doubtless will clear up everything," said Tito. "That is all the Latin—all the conclusions that are to be proved true or false by the trial. The rest you can perceive is simply a proclamation of the Signoria in good Tuscan, calling on such as are eager to walk through the fire, to come to the Palazzo and subscribe their names. Can I serve you further? If not——"

Tito, as he turned away, raised his cap and bent slightly, with so easy an air that the movement seemed a natural prompting of deference.

He quickened his pace as he left the Piazza, and after two or three turnings he paused in a quiet street before a door at which he gave a light and peculiar knock. It was opened by a young woman whom he chucked under the chin as he asked her if the Padrone was within, and

he then passed, without further ceremony, through another door which stood ajar on his right hand. It admitted him into a handsome but untidy room, where Dolfo Spini sat playing with a fine stag-hound which alternately snuffed at a basket of pups and licked his hands with that affectionate disregard of her master's morals sometimes held to be one of the most agreeable attributes of her sex. He just looked up as Tito entered, but continued his play, simply from that disposition to persistence in some irrelevant action, by which slow-witted sensual people seem to be continually counteracting their own purposes. Tito was patient.

"A handsome *bracca* that," he said, quietly, standing with his thumbs in his belt. Presently he added, in that cool liquid tone which seemed mild, but compelled attention, "When you have finished such caresses as cannot possibly be deferred, my Dolfo, we will talk of business, if you please. My time, which I could wish to be eternity at your service, is not entirely my own this morning."

"Down, Mischief, down!" said Spini, with sudden roughness. "Malediction!" he added, still more gruffly, pushing the dog aside; then, starting from his seat, he stood close to Tito, and put a hand on his shoulder as he spoke.

"I hope your sharp wits see all the ins and outs of this business, my fine necromancer, for it seems to me no clearer than the bottom of a sack."

"What is your difficulty, my cavalier?"

"These accursed Frati Minori at Santa Croce. They are drawing back now. Fra Francesco himself seems afraid of sticking to his challenge; talks of the Prophet being likely to use magic to get up a false miracle—thinks he himself might be dragged into the fire and burned, and the Prophet might come out whole by magic, and the Church be none the better. And then, after all our talking, there's not so much as a blessed lay brother who will offer himself to pair with that pious sheep Fra Domenico."

"It is the peculiar stupidity of the tonsured skull that prevents them from seeing how little consequence it is whether they are burned or not," said Tito. "Have you sworn well to them that they shall be in no danger of entering the fire?"

"No," said Spini, looking puzzled; "because one of them will be obliged to go in with Fra Domenico, who thinks it a thousand years till the fagots are ready."

"Not at all. Fra Domenico himself is not likely to go

in. I have told you before, my Dolfo, only your powerful mind is not to be impressed without more repetition than suffices for the vulgar—I have told you that now you have got the Signoria to take up this affair and prevent it from being hushed up by Fra Girolamo, nothing is necessary but that on a given day the fuel shall be prepared in the Piazza, and the people got together with the expectation of seeing something prodigious. If, after that, the Prophet quits the Piazza without any appearance of a miracle on his side, he is ruined with the people: they will be ready to pelt him out of the city, the Signoria will find it easy to banish him from the territory, and his Holiness may do as he likes with him. Therefore, my Alcibiades, swear to the Franciscans that their gray frocks shall not come within singeing distance of the fire.”

Spini rubbed the back of his head with one hand, and tapped his sword against his leg with the other, to stimulate his power of seeing these intangible combinations.

“But,” he said presently, looking up again, “unless we fall on him in the Piazza, when the people are in a rage, and make an end of him and his lies then and there, Valori and the Salviati and the Albizzi will take up arms and raise a fight for him. I know that was talked of when there was the hubbub on Ascension Sunday. And the people may turn round again: there may be a story raised of the French king coming again, or some other cursed chance in the hypocrite’s favor. The city will never be safe till he’s out of it.”

“He *will* be out of it before long, without your giving yourself any further trouble than this little comedy of the Trial by Fire. The wine and the sun will make vinegar without any shouting to help them, as your Florentine sages would say. You will have the satisfaction of delivering your city from an incubus by an able stratagem, instead of risking blunders with sword-thrusts.”

“But suppose he *did* get magic and the devil to help him, and walk through the fire after all?” said Spini, with a grimace intended to hide a certain shyness in trenching on this speculative ground. “How do you know there’s nothing in those things? Plenty of scholars believe in them, and this Frate is bad enough for anything.”

“Oh, of course there are such things,” said Tito, with a shrug: “but I have particular reasons for knowing that the Frate is not on such terms with the devil as can give

him any confidence in this affair. The only magic he relies on is his own ability."

"Ability!" said Spini. "Do you call it ability to be setting Florence at loggerheads with the Pope and all the powers of Italy—all to keep beckoning at the French king who never comes? You may call him able, but I call him a hypocrite who wants to be master of everybody, and get himself made Pope."

"You judge with your usual penetration, my captain, but our opinions do not clash. The Frate, wanting to be master, and to carry out his projects against the Pope, requires the lever of a foreign power, and requires Florence as a fulcrum. I used to think him a narrow-minded bigot, but now I think him a shrewd, ambitious man, who knows what he is aiming at, and directs his aim as skillfully as you direct a ball when you are playing at *maglio*."

"Yes, yes," said Spini, cordially, "I can aim a ball."

"It is true," said Tito, with bland gravity; "and I should not have troubled you with my trivial remark on the Frate's ability, but that you may see how this will heighten the credit of your success against him at Rome and at Milan, which is sure to serve you in good stead when the city comes to change its policy."

"Well, thou art a good little demon, and shalt have good pay," said Spini, patronizingly; whereupon he thought it only natural that the useful Greek adventurer should smile with gratification as he said—

"Of course, any advantage to me depends entirely on your——"

"We shall have our supper at my palace to-night," interrupted Spini, with a significant nod and an affectionate pat on Tito's shoulder, "and I shall expound the new scheme to them all."

"Pardon, my magnificent patron," said Tito; "the scheme has been the same from the first—it has never varied except in your memory. Are you sure you have fast hold of it now?"

Spini rehearsed.

"One thing more," he said, as Tito was hastening away. "There is that sharp-nosed notary, Ser Ceccone; he has been handy of late. Tell me, you who can see a man wink when you're behind him, do you think I may go on making use of him?"

Tito dared not say "No." He knew his companion too

well to trust him with advice when all Spini's vanity and self-interest were not engaged in concealing the adviser.

"Doubtless," he answered, promptly. "I have nothing to say against Ceccone."

That suggestion of the notary's intimate access to Spini caused Tito a passing twinge, interrupting his amused satisfaction in the success with which he made a tool of the man who fancied himself a patron. For he had been rather afraid of Ser Ceccone. Tito's nature made him peculiarly alive to circumstances that might be turned to his disadvantage; his memory was much haunted by such possibilities, stimulating him to contrivances by which he might ward them off. And it was not likely that he should forget that October morning more than a year ago, when Romola had appeared suddenly before him at the door of Nello's shop, and had compelled him to declare his certainty that Fra Girolamo was not going outside the gates. The fact that Ser Ceccone had been a witness of that scene, together with Tito's perception that for some reason or other he was an object of dislike to the notary, had received a new importance from the recent turn of events. For after having been implicated in the Medicean plots, and having found it advisable in consequence to retire into the country for some time, Ser Ceccone had of late, since his reappearance in the city, attached himself to the Arrabbiati, and cultivated the patronage of Dolfo Spini. Now that captain of the Compagnacci was much given, when in the company of intimates, to confidential narrative about his own doings, and if Ser Ceccone's powers of combination were sharpened by enmity, he might gather some knowledge which he could use against Tito with very unpleasant results.

It would be pitiable to be balked in well-conducted schemes by an insignificant notary; to be lamed by the sting of an insect whom he had offended unawares. "But," Tito said to himself, "the man's dislike to me can be nothing deeper than the ill-humor of a dinnerless dog; I shall conquer it if I can make him prosperous." And he had been very glad of an opportunity which had presented itself of providing the notary with a temporary post as an extra *cancelliere* or registering secretary under the Ten, believing that with this sop and the expectation of more, the waspish cur must be quite cured of the disposition to bite him.

But perfect scheming demands omniscience, and the

notary's envy had been stimulated into hatred by causes of which Tito knew nothing. That evening when Tito, returning from his critical audience with the Special Council, had brushed by Ser Ceccone on the stairs, the notary, who had only just returned from Pistoja, and learned the arrest of the conspirators, was bound on an errand which bore a humble resemblance to Tito's. He also, without giving up a show of popular zeal, had been putting in the Medicean lottery. He also had been privy to the unexecuted plot, and was willing to tell what he knew, but knew much less to tell. He also would have been willing to go on treacherous errands, but a more eligible agent had forestalled him. His propositions were received coldly; the council, he was told, was already in possession of the needed information, and since he had been thus busy in sedition, it would be well for him to retire out of the way of mischief, otherwise the government might be obliged to take note of him. Ser Ceccone wanted no evidence to make him attribute his failure to Tito, and his spite was the more bitter because the nature of the case compelled him to hold his peace about it. Nor was this the whole of his grudge against the flourishing Melema. On issuing from his hiding-place, and attaching himself to the Arrabbiati, he had earned some pay as one of the spies who reported information on Florentine affairs to the Milanese court; but his pay had been small, notwithstanding his pains to write full letters, and he had lately been apprised that his news was seldom more than a late and imperfect edition of what was known already. Now Ser Ceccone had no positive knowledge that Tito had an underhand connection with the Arrabbiati and the Court of Milan, but he had a suspicion of which he chewed the cud with as strong a sense of flavor as if it had been a certainty.

This fine-grown vigorous hatred could swallow the feeble opiate of Tito's favors, and be as lively as ever after it. Why should Ser Ceccone like Melema any the better for doing him favors? Doubtless the suave secretary had his own ends to serve; and what right had he to the superior position which made it possible for him to show favor? But since he had turned his voice to flattery, Ser Ceccone would pitch his in the same key, and it remained to be seen who would win at the game of outwitting.

To have a mind well oiled with that sort of argument which prevents any claim from grasping it, seems eminently convenient sometimes; only the oil becomes objectionable

when we find it anointing other minds on which we want to establish a hold.

Tito, however, not being quite omniscient, felt now no more than a passing twinge of uneasiness at the suggestion of Ser Ceccone's power to hurt him. It was only for a little while that he cared greatly about keeping clear of suspicions and hostility. He was now playing his final game in Florence, and, the skill he was conscious of applying gave him a pleasure in it even apart from the expected winnings. The errand on which he was bent to San Marco was a stroke in which he felt so much confidence, that he had already given notice to the Ten of his desire to resign his office at an indefinite period within the next month or two, and had obtained permission to make that resignation suddenly, if his affairs needed it, with the understanding that Niccolò Macchiavelli was to be his provisional substitute, if not his successor. He was acting on hypothetic grounds, but this was the sort of action that had the keenest interest for his diplomatic mind. From a combination of general knowledge concerning Savonarola's purposes with diligently observed details he had framed a conjecture which he was about to verify by this visit to San Marco. If he proved to be right, his game would be won, and he might soon turn his back on Florence. He looked eagerly toward that consummation, for many circumstances besides his own weariness of the place told him that it was time for him to be gone.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE PROPHET IN HIS CELL.

TITO's visit to San Marco had been announced beforehand, and he was at once conducted by Fra Niccolò, Savonarola's secretary, up the spiral staircase into the long corridors lined with cells—corridors where Fra Angelico's frescoes, delicate as the rainbow on the melting cloud, startled the unaccustomed eye here and there, as if they had been sudden reflections cast from an ethereal world, where the Madonna sat crowned in her radiant glory, and the Divine infant looked forth with perpetual promise.

It was an hour of relaxation in the monastery, and most

of the cells were empty. The light through the narrow windows looked in on nothing but bare walls, and the hard pallet and the crucifix. And even behind that door at the end of a long corridor, in the inner cell opening from an antechamber where the Prior usually sat at his desk or received private visitors, the high jet of light fell on only one more object that looked quite as common a monastic sight as the bare walls and hard pallet. It was but the back of a figure in the long white Dominican tunic and scapulary, kneeling with bowed head before a crucifix. It might have been any ordinary Fra Girolamo, who had nothing worse to confess than thinking of wrong things when he was singing *in coro*, or feeling a spiteful joy when Fra Benedetto dropped the ink over his own miniatures in the breviary he was illuminating—who had no higher thought than that of climbing safely into Paradise up the narrow ladder of prayer, fasting, and obedience. But under this particular white tunic there was a heart beating with a consciousness inconceivable to the average monk, and perhaps hard to be conceived by any man who has not arrived at self-knowledge through a tumultuous inner life: a consciousness in which irrevocable errors and lapses from veracity were so entwined with noble purposes and sincere beliefs, in which self-justifying expediency was so inwoven with the tissue of a great work which the whole being seemed as unable to abandon as the body was unable to abandon glowing and trembling before the objects of hope and fear, that it was perhaps impossible, whatever course might be adopted, for the conscience to find perfect repose.

Savonarola was not only in the attitude of prayer, there were Latin words of prayer on his lips; and yet he was not praying. He had entered his cell, had fallen on his knees, and burst into words of supplication, seeking in this way for an influx of calmness which would be a warrant to him that the resolutions urged on him by crowding thoughts and passions were not wresting him away from the Divine support; but the previsions and impulses which had been at work within him for the last hour were too imperious; and while he pressed his hands against his face, and while his lips were uttering audibly, "*Cor mundum crea in me,*" his mind was still filled with the images of the snare his enemies had prepared for him, was still busy with the arguments by which he could justify himself against their taunts and accusations.

And it was not only against his opponents that Savonarola had to defend himself. This morning he had had new proof that his friends and followers were as much inclined to urge on the Trial by Fire as his enemies: desiring and tacitly expecting that he himself would at last accept the challenge and evoke the long-expected miracle which was to dissipate doubt and triumph over malignity. Had he not said that God would declare himself at the fitting time? And to the understanding of plain Florentines, eager to get party questions settled, it seemed that no time could be more fitting than this. Certainly, if Fra Domenico walked through the fire unhurt, *that* would be a miracle, and the faith and ardor of that good brother were felt to be a cheering augury; but Savonarola was acutely conscious that the secret longing of his followers to see him accept the challenge had not been dissipated by any reasons he had given for his refusal.

Yet it was impossible to him to satisfy them; and with bitter distress he saw now that it was impossible for him any longer to resist the prosecution of the trial in Fra Domenico's case. Not that Savonarola had uttered and written a falsity when he declared his belief in a future supernatural attestation of his work: but his mind was so constituted that, while it was easy for him to believe in a miracle, which, being distant and undefined, was screened behind the strong reasons he saw for its occurrence, and yet easier for him to have a belief in inward miracles such as his own prophetic inspiration and divinely-wrought intuitions; it was at the same time insurmountably difficult to him to believe in the probability of a miracle which, like this of being carried unhurt through the fire, pressed in all its details on his imagination and involved a demand not only for belief but for exceptional action.

Savonarola's nature was one of those in which opposing tendencies coexist in almost equal strength: the passionate sensibility which, impatient of definite thought, floods every idea with emotion and tends toward contemplative ecstasy, alternated in him with a keen perception of outward facts and a vigorous practical judgment of men and things. And in this case of the Trial by Fire, the latter characteristics were stimulated into unusual activity by an acute physical sensitiveness which gives overpowering force to the conception of pain and destruction as a necessary sequence of facts which have already been causes of pain in our experience. The promptitude with which men will

consent to touch red-hot iron with a wet finger is not to be measured by their theoretic acceptance of the impossibility that the iron will burn them: practical belief depends on what is most strongly represented in the mind at a given moment. And with the Frate's constitution, when the Trial by Fire was urged on his imagination as an immediate demand, it was impossible for him to believe that he or any other man could walk through the flames unhurt—impossible for him to believe that even if he resolved to offer himself, he would not shrink at the last moment.

But the Florentines were not likely to make these fine distinctions. To the common run of mankind it has always seemed a proof of mental vigor to find moral questions easy, and judge conduct according to concise alternatives. And nothing was likely to seem plainer than that a man who at one time declared that God would not leave him without the guarantee of a miracle, and yet drew back when it was proposed to test his declaration, had said what he did not believe. Were not Fra Domenico and Fra Mariano, and scores of Piagnoni besides, ready to enter the fire? What was the cause of their superior courage, if it was not their superior faith? Savonarola could not have explained his conduct satisfactorily to his friends, even if he had been able to explain it thoroughly to himself. And he was not. Our naked feelings make haste to clothe themselves in propositions which lie at hand among our store of opinions, and to give a true account of what passes within us something else is necessary besides sincerity, even when sincerity is unmixed. In these very moments, when Savonarola was kneeling in audible prayer, he had ceased to hear the words on his lips. They were drowned by argumentative voices within him that shaped their reasons more and more for an outward audience.

“To appeal to heaven for a miracle by a rash acceptance of a challenge, which is a mere snare prepared for me by ignoble foes, would be a tempting of God, and the appeal would not be responded to. Let the Pope's legate come, let the ambassadors of all the great powers come and promise that the calling of a General Council and the reform of the Church shall hang on the miracle, and I will enter the flames, trusting that God will not withhold His seal from that great work. Until then I reserve myself for higher duties which are directly laid upon me: it is not permitted to me to leap from the chariot for the sake of wrestling with every loud vaunter. But Fra Domenico's invincible zeal to

enter into the trial may be the sign of a Divine vocation, may be a pledge that the miracle——”

But no! when Savonarola brought his mind close to the threatened scene in the Piazza, and imagined a human body entering the fire, his belief recoiled again. It was not an event that his imagination could simply see: he felt it with shuddering vibrations to the extremities of his sensitive fingers. The miracle could not be. Nay, the trial itself was not to happen: he was warranted in doing all in his power to hinder it. The fuel might be got ready in the Piazza, the people might be assembled, the preparatory formalities might be gone through: all this was perhaps inevitable now, and he could no longer resist it without bringing dishonor on—himself? Yes, and therefore on the cause of God. But it was not really intended that the Franciscan should enter the fire, and while *he* hung back there would be the means of preventing Fra Domenico's entrance. At the very worst, if Fra Domenico were compelled to enter, he should carry the consecrated Host with him, and with that Mystery in his hand, there might be a warrant for expecting that the ordinary effects of fire would be stayed; or, more probably, this demand would be resisted, and might thus be a final obstacle to the trial.

But these intentions could not be avowed: he must appear frankly to await the trial, and to trust in its issue. That dissidence between inward reality and outward seeming was not the Christian simplicity after which he had striven through years of his youth and prime, and which he had preached as a chief fruit of the Divine life. In the stress and heat of the day, with cheeks burning, with shouts ringing in the ears, who is so blest as to remember the yearnings he had in the cool and silent morning and know that he has not belied them?

“O God, it is for the sake of the people—because they are blind—because their faith depends on me. If I put on sackcloth and cast myself among the ashes, who will take up the standard and head the battle? Have I not been led by a way which I knew not to the work that lies before me?”

The conflict was one that could not end, and in the effort at prayerful pleading the uneasy mind laved its smart continually in thoughts of the greatness of that task which there was no man else to fulfill if he forsook it. It was not a thing of every day that a man should be inspired with the vision and the daring that made a sacred rebel.

Even the words of prayer had died away. He continued to kneel, but his mind was filled with the images of results to be felt through all Europe; and the sense of immediate difficulties was being lost in the glow of that vision, when the knocking at the door announced the expected visit.

Savonarola drew on his mantle before he left his cell, as was his custom when he received visitors; and with that immediate response to any appeal from without which belongs to a power-loving nature accustomed to make its power felt by speech, he met Tito with a glance as self-possessed and strong as if he had risen from resolution instead of conflict.

Tito did not kneel, but simply made a greeting of profound deference, which Savonarola received quietly without any sacerdotal words, and then desiring him to be seated, said at once—

“Your business is something of weight, my son, that could not be conveyed through others?”

“Assuredly, father, else I should not have presumed to ask it. I will not trespass on your time by any proem. I gathered from a remark of Messer Domenico Mazzinghi that you might be glad to make use of the next special courier who is sent to France with dispatches from the Ten. I must entreat you to pardon me if I have been too officious; but inasmuch as Messer Domenico is at this moment away at his villa, I wished to apprise you that a courier carrying important letters is about to depart for Lyons at daybreak to-morrow.”

The muscles of Fra Girolamo's face were eminently under command, as must be the case with all men whose personality is powerful, and in deliberate speech he was habitually cautious, confiding his intentions to none without necessity. But under any strong mental stimulus, his eyes were liable to a dilation and added brilliancy that no strength of will could control. He looked steadily at Tito, and did not answer immediately, as if he had to consider whether the information he had just heard met any purpose of his.

Tito, whose glance never seemed observant, but rarely let anything escape it, had expected precisely that dilatation and flash of Savonarola's eyes which he had noted on other occasions. He saw it, and then immediately busied himself in adjusting his gold fibula, which had got wrong; seeming to imply that he awaited an answer patiently.

The fact was that Savonarola had expected to receive

this intimation from Domenico Mazzinghi, one of the Ten, an ardent disciple of his whom he had already employed to write a private letter to the Florentine ambassador in France, to prepare the way for a letter to the French king himself in Savonarola's handwriting, which now lay ready in the desk at his side. It was a letter calling on the king to assist in summoning a General Council, that might reform the abuses of the Church, and begin by deposing Pope Alexander, who was not rightfully Pope, being a vicious unbeliever, elected by corruption and governing by simony.

This fact was not what Tito knew, but what his constructive talent, guided by subtle indications, had led him to guess and hope.

"It is true, my son," said Savonarola, quietly, "it is true I have letters which I would gladly send by safe conveyance under cover to our ambassador. Our community of San Marco, as you know, has affairs in France, being, amongst other things, responsible for a debt to that singularly wise and experienced Frenchman, Signor Philippe de Comines, on the library of the Medici, which we purchased; but I apprehend that Domenico Mezzinghi himself may return to the city before evening, and I should gain more time for preparation of the letters if I waited to deposit them in his hands."

"Assuredly, reverend father, that might be better on all grounds, except one, namely, that if anything occurred to hinder Messer Domenico's return, the dispatch of the letters would require either that I should come to San Marco again at a late hour, or that you should send them to me by your secretary; and I am aware that you wish to guard against the false inferences which might be drawn from a too frequent communication between yourself and any officer of the government." In throwing out this difficulty Tito felt that the more unwillingness the Frate showed to trust him, the more certain he would be of his conjecture.

Savonarola was silent; but while he kept his mouth firm a slight glow rose in his face with the suppressed excitement that was growing within him. It would be a critical moment—that in which he delivered the letter out of his own hands.

"It is most probable that Messer Domenico will return in time," said Tito, affecting to consider the Frate's determination settled, and rising from his chair as he spoke.

“With your permission, I will take my leave, father, not to trespass on your time when my errand is done; but as I may not be favored with another interview, I venture to confide to you—what is not yet known to others, except to the Magnificent Ten—that I contemplate resigning my secretaryship and leaving Florence shortly. Am I presuming too much on your interest in stating what relates chiefly to myself?”

“Speak on, my son,” said the Frate; “I desire to know your prospects.”

“I find, then, that I have mistaken my real vocation in forsaking the career of pure letters, for which I was brought up. The politics of Florence, father, are worthy to occupy the greatest mind—to occupy yours—when a man is in a position to execute his own ideas; but when, like me, he can only hope to be the mere instrument of changing schemes, he requires to be animated by the minor attachments of a born Florentine; also, my wife’s unhappy alienation from a Florentine residence since the painful events of August naturally influences me. I wish to join her.”

Savonarola inclined his head approvingly.

“I intend, then, soon to leave Florence, to visit the chief courts of Europe, and to widen my acquaintance with the men of letters in the various universities. I shall go first to the court of Hungary, where scholars are eminently welcome; and I shall probably start in a week or ten days. I have not concealed from you, father, that I am no religious enthusiast; I have not my wife’s ardor; but religious enthusiasm, as I conceive, is not necessary in order to appreciate the grandeur and justice of your views concerning the government of nations and the Church. And if you condescend to intrust me with any commission that will further the relations you wish to establish, I shall feel honored. May I now take my leave?”

“Stay, my son. When you depart from Florence I will send a letter to your wife, of whose spiritual welfare I would fain be assured, for she left me in anger. As for the letters to France, such as I have ready——”

Savonarola rose and turned to his desk as he spoke. He took from it a letter on which Tito could see, but not read, an address in the Frate’s own minute and exquisite handwriting, still to be seen covering the margins of his Bibles. He took a large sheet of paper, enclosed the letter, and sealed it.

"Pardon me, father," said Tito, before Savonarola had time to speak, "unless it were your decided wish, I would rather not incur the responsibility of carrying away the letter. Messer Domenico Mazzinghi will doubtless return, or, if not, Fra Niccolò can convey it to me at the second hour of the evening, when I shall place the other dispatches in the courier's hands."

"At present, my son," said the Frate, waiving that point, "I wish you to address this packet to our ambassador in your own handwriting, which is preferable to my secretary's."

Tito sat down to write the address while the Frate stood by him with folded arms, the glow mounting in his cheek, and his lip at last quivering. Tito rose and was about to move away, when Savonarola said abruptly—"Take it, my son. There is no use in waiting. It does not please me that Fra Niccolò should have needless errands to the Palazzo."

As Tito took the letter, Savonarola stood in suppressed excitement that forbade further speech. There seems to be a subtle emanation from passionate natures like his, making their mental states tell immediately on others; when they are absent-minded and inwardly excited there is silence in the air.

Tito made a deep reverence and went out with the letter under his mantle.

The letter was duly delivered to the courier and carried out of Florence. But before that happened another messenger, privately employed by Tito, had conveyed information in cipher, which was carried by a series of relays to armed agents of Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, on the watch for the very purpose of intercepting dispatches on the borders of the Milanese territory.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE TRIAL BY FIRE.

LITTLE more than a week after, on the seventh of April, the great Piazza della Signoria presented a stranger spectacle even than the famous Bonfire of Vanities. And a greater multitude had assembled to see it than had ever

before tried to find place for themselves in the wide Piazza, even on the day of San Giovanni.

It was near midday, and since the early morning there had been a gradual swarming of the people at every coign of vantage or disadvantage offered by the façades and roofs of the houses, and such spaces of the pavement as were free to the public. Men were seated on iron rods that made a sharp angle with the rising wall, were clutching slim pillars with arms and legs, were astride on the necks of the rough statuary that here and there surmounted the entrances of the grander houses, were finding a palm's-breadth of seat on a bit of architrave, and a footing on the rough projections of the rustic stonework, while they clutched the strong iron rings or staples driven into the walls beside them.

For they were come to see a Miracle: cramped limbs and abraded flesh seemed slight inconveniences with that prospect close at hand. It is the ordinary lot of mankind to hear of miracles, and more or less to believe in them; but now the Florentines were going to see one. At the very least they would see half a miracle; for if the monk did not come whole out of the fire, they would see him enter it, and infer that he was burned in the middle.

There could be no reasonable doubt, it seemed, that the fire would be kindled, and that the monks would enter it. For there, before their eyes, was the long platform, eight feet broad, and twenty yards long, with a grove of fuel heaped up terribly, great branches of dry oak as a foundation, crackling thorns above, and well-anointed tow and rags, known to make fine flames in Florentine illuminations. The platform began at the corner of the marble terrace in front of the Old Palace, close to Marzocco, the stone lion, whose aged visage looked frowningly along the grove of fuel that stretched obliquely across the Piazza.

Besides that, there were three large bodies of armed men: five hundred hired soldiers of the Signoria stationed before the palace; five hundred Compagnacci under Dolfo Spini, far off on the opposite side of the Piazza; and three hundred armed citizens of another sort, under Marco Salviati, Savonarola's friend, in front of Orgagna's Loggia, where the Franciscans and Dominicans were to be placed with their champions.

Here had been much expense of money and labor, and high dignities were concerned. There could be no reasonable doubt that something great was about to happen;

and it would certainly be a great thing if the two monks were simply burned, for in that case too God would have spoken, and said very plainly that Fra Girolamo was not his prophet.

And there was not much longer to wait, for it was now near midday. Half the monks were already at their post, and that half of the loggia that lies toward the palace was already filled with gray mantles; but the other half, divided off by boards, was still empty of everything except a small altar. The Franciscans had entered and taken their places in silence. But now, at the other side of the piazza was heard loud chanting from two hundred voices, and there was general satisfaction, if not in the chanting, at least in the evidence that the Dominicans were come. That loud chanting repetition of the prayer, "Let God arise; and let his enemies be scattered," was unpleasantly suggestive to some impartial ears of a desire to vaunt confidence and excite dismay; and so was the flame-colored velvet cope in which Fra Domenico was arrayed as he headed the procession, cross in hand, his simple mind really exalted with faith, and with the genuine intention to enter the flames for the glory of God and Fra Girolamo. Behind him came Savonarola in the white vestment of a priest, carrying in his hands a vessel containing the consecrated Host. He, too, was chanting loudly; he, too, looked firm and confident, and as all eyes were turned eagerly on him, either in anxiety, curiosity, or malignity, from the moment when he entered the piazza till he mounted the steps of the loggia and deposited the Sacrament on the altar, there was an intensifying flash and energy in his countenance responding to that scrutiny.

We are so made, almost all of us, that the false seeming which we have thought of with painful shrinking when beforehand in our solitude it has urged itself on us as a necessity, will possess our muscles and move our lips as if nothing but that were easy when once we have come under the stimulus of expectant eyes and ears. And the strength of that stimulus to Savonarola can hardly be measured by the experience of ordinary lives. Perhaps no man has ever had a mighty influence over his fellows without having the innate need to dominate, and this need usually becomes the more imperious in proportion as the complications of life make Self inseparable from a purpose which is not selfish. In this way it came to pass that on

the day of the Trial by Fire, the doubleness which is the pressing temptation in every public career, whether of priest, orator, or statesman, was more strongly defined in Savonarola's consciousness as the acting of a part, than at any other period in his life. He was struggling not against impending martyrdom, but against impending ruin.

Therefore he looked and acted as if he were thoroughly confident, when all the while foreboding was pressing, with leaden weight on his heart, not only because of the probable issues of this trial, but because of another event already past—an event which was spreading a sunny satisfaction through the mind of a man who was looking down at the passion-worn prophet from a window of the Old Palace. It was a common turning-point toward which those widely-sundered lives had been converging, that two evenings ago the news had come that the Florentine courier of the Ten had been arrested and robbed of all his dispatches, so that Savonarola's letter was already in the hands of the Duke of Milan, and would soon be in the hands of the Pope, not only heightening rage, but giving a new justification to extreme measures. There was no malignity in Tito Melema's satisfaction: it was a mild self-gratulation of a man who has won a game that has employed hypothetic skill, not a game that has stirred the muscles and heated the blood. Of course that bundle of desires and contrivances called human nature, when moulded into the form of a plain-featured Frate Predicatore, more or less of an impostor, could not be a pathetic object to a brilliant-minded scholar who understood everything. Yet this tonsured Girolamo with the high nose and large under lip was an immensely clever Frate, mixing with his absurd superstitions or fabrications very remarkable notions about government: no babbler, but a man who could keep his secrets. Tito had no more spite against him than against Saint Dominic. On the contrary, Fra Girolamo's existence had been highly convenient to Tito Melema, furnishing him with that round of the ladder from which he was about to leap on to a new and smooth footing very much to his heart's content. And everything now was in forward preparation for that leap: let one more sun rise and set, and Tito hoped to quit Florence. He had been so industrious that he felt at full leisure to amuse himself with to-day's comedy, which the

thick-headed Dolfo Spini could never have brought about but for him.

Not yet did the loud chanting cease, but rather swelled to a deafening roar, being taken up in all parts of the Piazza by the Piagnoni, who carried their little red crosses as a badge, and, most of them, chanted the prayer for the confusion of God's enemies with the expectation of an answer to be given through the medium of a more signal personage than Fra Domenico. This good Frate in his flame-colored cope was now kneeling before the little altar on which the Sacrament was deposited, awaiting his summons.

On the Franciscan side of the Loggia there was no chanting and no flame-color: only silence and grayness. But there was this counterbalancing difference, that the Franciscans had two champions: a certain Fra Giuliano was to pair with Fra Domenico, while the original champion, Fra Francesco, confined his challenge to Savonarola.

"Surely," thought the men perched uneasily on the rods and pillars, "all must be ready now. This chanting might stop, and we should see better when the Frati are moving toward the platform."

But the Frati were not to be seen moving yet. Cale Franciscan faces were looking uneasily over the boarding at that flame-colored cope. It had an evil look and might be enchanted, so that a false miracle would be wrought by magic. Your monk may come whole out of the fire, and yet it may be the work of the devil.

And now there was passing to and fro between the Loggia and the marble terrace of the Palazzo, and the roar of chanting became a little quieter, for every one at a distance was beginning to watch more eagerly. But it soon appeared that the new movement was not a beginning, but an obstacle to beginning. The dignified Florentines appointed to preside over this affair as moderators on each side, went in and out of the palace, and there was much debate with the Franciscans. But at last it was clear that Fra Domenico, conspicuous in his flame-color, was being fetched toward the Palace. Probably the fire had already been kindled—it was difficult to see at a distance—and the miracle was going to begin.

Not at all. The flame-colored cope disappeared within the Palace; then another Dominican was fetched away: and for a long while everything went on as before—the tiresome chanting, which was not miraculous, and Fra Gi-

rolamo in his white vestment standing just in the same place. But at last something happened; Fra Domenico was seen coming out of the Palace again, and returning to his brethren. He had changed all his clothes with a brother monk, but he was guarded on each flank by a Franciscan, lest coming into the vicinity of Savonarola he should be enchanted again.

"Ah, then," thought the distant spectators, a little less conscious of cramped limbs and hunger, "Fra Domenico is not going to enter the fire. It is Fra Girolamo who offers himself after all. We shall see him move presently, and if he comes out of the flames we shall have a fine view of him!"

But Fra Girolamo did not move, except with the ordinary action accompanying speech. The speech was bold and firm, perhaps somewhat ironically remonstrant, like that of Elijah to the priests of Baal, demanding the cessation of these trivial delays. But speech is the most irritating kind of argument for those who are out of hearing, cramped in the limbs and empty in the stomach. And what need was there for speech? If the miracle did not begin, it could be no one's fault but Fra Girolamo's, who might put an end to all difficulties by offering himself now the fire was ready, as he had been forward enough to do when there was no fuel in sight.

More movement to and fro, more discussion; and the afternoon seemed to be slipping away all the faster because the clouds had gathered, and changed the light on everything, and sent a chill through the spectators, hungry in mind and body.

Now it was the crucifix which Fra Domenico wanted to carry into the fire, and must not be allowed to profane in that manner. After some little resistance Savonarola gave way to this objection, and thus had the advantage of making one more concession; but he immediately placed in Fra Domenico's hands the vessel containing the consecrated Host. The idea that the presence of the sacred Mystery might in the worst extremity avert the ordinary effects of fire hovered in his mind as a possibility; but the issue on which he counted was of a more positive kind. In taking up the Host he said quietly, as if he were only doing what had been presupposed from the first—

"Since they are not willing that you should enter with the crucifix, my brother, enter simply with the Sacrament."

New horror in the Franciscans; new firmness in Savona-

rola. "It was impious presumption to carry the Sacrament into the fire; if it were burned the scandal would be great in the minds of the weak and ignorant." "Not at all: even if it were burned, the Accidents only would be consumed, the Substance would remain." Here was a question that might be argued till set of sun and remain as elastic as ever; and no one could propose settling it by proceeding to the trial, since it was essentially a preliminary question. It was only necessary that both sides should remain firm—that the Franciscans should persist in not permitting the Host to be carried into the fire, and that Fra Domenico should persist in refusing to enter without it.

Meanwhile the clouds were getting darker, the air chiller. Even the chanting was missed now it had given way to inaudible argument; and the confused sounds of talk from all points of the Piazza, showing that expectation was everywhere relaxing, contributed to the irritating presentiment that nothing decisive would be done. Here and there a dropping shout was heard; then, more frequent shouts in a rising scale of scorn.

"Light the fire and drive them in!" "Let us have a smell of roast—we want our dinner!" "Come, Prophet, let us know whether anything is to happen before the twenty-four hours are over!" "Yes, yes, what's your last vision?" "Oh, he's got a dozen in his inside; they're the small change for a miracle!" "Olà, Frate, where are you? Never mind wasting the fuel!"

Still the same movement to and fro between the Loggia and the Palace; still the same debate, slow and unintelligible to the multitude as the colloquies of insects that touch antennæ to no other apparent effect than that of going and coming. But an interpretation was not long wanting to unheard debates in which Fra Girolamo was constantly a speaker: it was he who was hindering the trial; everybody was appealing to him now, and he was hanging back.

Soon the shouts ceased to be distinguishable, and were lost in an uproar not simply of voices, but of clashing metal and trampling feet. The suggestions of the irritated people had stimulated old impulses in Dolfo Spini and his band of Compagnacci; it seemed an opportunity not to be lost for putting an end to Florentine difficulties by getting possession of the arch-hypocrite's person; and there was a vigorous rush of the armed men toward the Loggia, thrusting the people aside, or driving them on to the file of

soldiery stationed in front of the Palace. At this movement, everything was suspended both with monks and embarrassed magistrates except the palpitating watch to see what would come of the struggle.

But the Loggia was well guarded by the band under the brave Salviati; the soldiers of the Signoria assisted in the repulse; and the trampling and rushing were all backward again toward the Tetto de Pisani, when the blackness of the heavens seemed to intensify in this moment of utter confusion; and the rain, which had already been felt in scattered drops, began to fall with rapidly growing violence, wetting the fuel, and running in streams off the platform, wetting the weary hungry people to the skin, and driving every man's disgust and rage inwards to ferment there in the damp darkness.

Everybody knew now that the Trial by Fire was not to happen. The Signoria was doubtless glad of the rain, as an obvious reason better than any pretext, for declaring that both parties might go home. It was the issue which Savonarola had expected and desired; yet it would be an ill description of what he felt to say that he was glad. As that rain fell, and plashed on the edge of the Loggia, and sent spray over the altar and all garments and faces, the Frate knew that the demand for him to enter the fire was at an end. But he knew too, with a certainty as irresistible as the damp chill that had taken possession of his frame, that the design of his enemies was fulfilled, and that his honor was not saved. He knew that he should have to make his way to San Marco again through the enraged crowd, and that the hearts of many friends who would once have defended him with their lives would now be turned against him.

When the rain had ceased he asked for a guard from the Signoria, and it was given him. Had he said that he was willing to die for the work of his life? Yes, and he had not spoken falsely. But to die in dishonor—held up to scorn as a hypocrite and a false prophet? “O God! *that* is not martyrdom! It is the blotting out of a life that has been a protest against wrong. Let me die because of the worth that is in me, not because of my weakness.”

“The rain had ceased, and the light from the breaking clouds fell on Savonarola as he left the Loggia in the midst of his guard, walking as he had come, with the Sacrament in his hand. But there seemed no glory in the light that fell on him now, no smile of heaven; it was

only that light which shines on, patiently and impartially, justifying or condemning by simply showing all things in the slow history of their ripening. He heard no blessing, no tones of pity, but only taunts and threats. He knew this was a foretaste of coming bitterness; yet his courage mounted under all moral attack, and he showed no sign of dismay.

“Well parried, Frate!” said Tito, as Savonarola descended the steps of the Loggia. “But I fear your career at Florence is ended. What say you, my Niccolò?”

“It is a pity his falsehoods were not all of a wise sort,” said Macchiavelli, with a melancholy shrug. “With the times so much on his side as they are about Church affairs, he might have done something great.”

CHAPTER LXVI.

A MASK OF THE FURIES.

THE next day was Palm Sunday, or Olive Sunday, as it was chiefly called in the olive-growing Valdarno; and the morning sun shone with a more delicious clearness for the yesterday's rain. Once more Savonarola mounted the pulpit in San Marco, and saw a flock around him whose faith in him was still unshaken; and this morning in calm and sad sincerity he declared himself ready to die: in front of all visions he saw his own doom. Once more he uttered the benediction, and saw the faces of men and women lifted toward him in venerating love. Then he descended the steps of the pulpit and turned away from that sight forever.

For before the sun had set Florence was in an uproar. The passions which had been roused the day before had been smouldering through that quiet morning, and had now burst out again with a fury not unassisted by design, and not without official connivance. The uproar had begun at the Duomo in an attempt of some Compagnacci to hinder the evening sermon, which the Piagnoni had assembled to hear. But no sooner had men's blood mounted and the disturbances had become an affray than the cry arose, “To San Marco! the fire to San Marco!”

And long before the daylight had died, both the church

and convent were being besieged by an enraged and continually increasing multitude. Not without resistance. For the monks, long conscious of growing hostility without, had arms within their walls, and some of them fought as vigorously in their long white tunics as if they had been Knights Templars. Even the command of Savonarola could not prevail against the impulse to self-defense in arms that were still muscular under the Dominican serge. There were laymen too who had not chosen to depart, and some of them fought fiercely: there was firing from the high altar close by the great crucifix, there was pouring of stones and hot embers from the convent roof, there was close fighting with swords in the cloisters. Notwithstanding the force of the assailants, the attack lasted till deep night.

The demonstrations of the Government had all been against the convent; early in the attack guards had been sent for, not to disperse the assailants, but to command all within the convent to lay down their arms, all laymen to depart from it, and Savonarola himself to quit the Florentine territory within twelve hours. Had Savonarola quitted the convent then, he could hardly have escaped being torn to pieces; he was willing to go, but his friends hindered him. It was felt to be a great risk even for some laymen of high name to depart by the garden wall, but among those who had chosen to do so was Francesco Valori, who hoped to raise rescue from without.

And now when it was deep night—when the struggle could hardly have lasted much longer, and the Compagnacci might soon have carried their swords into the library, where Savonarola was praying with the Brethren who had either not taken up arms or had laid them down at his command—there came a second body of guards, commissioned by the Signoria to demand the persons of Fra Girolamo and his two coadjutors, Fra Domenico and Fra Salvestro.

Loud was the roar of triumphant hate when the light of lanterns showed the Frate issuing from the door of the convent with a guard who promised him no other safety than that of the prison. The struggle now was, who should get first in the stream that rushed up the narrow street to see the Prophet carried back in ignominy to the Piazza where he had braved it yesterday—who should be in the best place for reaching his ear with insult, nay, if possible, for smiting him and kicking him. This was not difficult

for some of the armed Compagnacci who were not prevented from mixing themselves with the guards.

When Savonarola felt himself dragged and pushed along in the midst of that hooting multitude; when lanterns were lifted to show him deriding faces; when he felt himself spit upon, smitten and kicked with grossest words of insult, it seemed to him that the worst bitterness of life was past. If men judged him guilty, and were bent on having his blood, it was only death that awaited him. But the worst drop of bitterness can never be wrung on to our lips from without; the lowest depth of resignation is not to be found in martyrdom; it is only to be found when we have covered our heads in silence and felt, "I am not worthy to be a martyr; the Truth shall prosper, but not by me."

But that brief imperfect triumph of insulting the Frate, who had soon disappeared under the doorway of the Old Palace, was only like the taste of blood to the tiger. Were there not the houses of the hypocrite's friends to be sacked? Already one half of the armed multitude, too much in the rear to share greatly in the siege of the convent, had been employed in the more profitable work of attacking rich houses, not with planless desire for plunder, but with that discriminating selection of such as belonged to chief Piagnoni, which showed that the riot was under guidance, and that the rabble with clubs and staves was well officered by sword-girt Compagnacci. Was there not—next criminal after the Frate—the ambitious Francesco Valori, suspected of wanting with the Frate's help to make himself a Doge or Gonfaloniere for life? And the gray-haired man who, eight months ago, had lifted his arm and his voice in such ferocious demand for justice on five of his fellow-citizens, only escaped from San Marco to experience what *others* called justice—to see his house surrounded by an angry, greedy multitude, to see his wife shot dead with an arrow, and to be himself murdered, as he was on his way to answer a summons to the Palazzo, by the swords of men named Ridolfi and Tornabuoni.

In this way that Mask of the Furies, called Riot, was played on in Florence through the hours of night and early morning.

But the chief director was not visible: he had his reasons for issuing his orders from a private retreat, being of rather too high a name to let his red feather be seen waving amongst all the work that was to be done before the dawn.

The retreat was the same house and the same room in a quiet street between Santa Croce and San Marco, where we have seen Tito paying a secret visit to Dolfo Spini. Here the Captain of the Compagnacci sat through this memorable night, receiving visitors who came and went, and went and came, some of them in the guise of armed Compagnacci, others dressed obscurely and without visible arms. There was abundant wine on the table, with drinking-cups for chance comers; and though Spini was on his guard against excessive drinking, he took enough from time to time to heighten the excitement produced by the news that was being brought to him continually.

Among the obscurely-dressed visitors Ser Ceccone was one of the most frequent, and as the hours advanced toward the morning twilight he had remained as Spini's constant companion, together with Francesco Cei, who was then in rather careless hiding in Florence, expecting to have his banishment revoked when the Frate's fall had been accomplished.

The tapers had burned themselves into low shapeless masses, and holes in the shutters were just marked by a sombre outward light, when Spini, who had started from his seat and walked up and down with an angry flush on his face at some talk that had been going forward with those two unmilitary companions, burst forth—

"The devil spit on him! he shall pay for it though. Ha, ha! the claws shall be down on him when he little thinks of them. So *he* was to be the great man after all! He's been pretending to chuck everything toward my cap, as if I were a blind beggarman, and all the while he's been winking and filling his own scarsella. I should like to hang skins about him and set my hounds on him! And he's got that fine ruby of mine, I was fool enough to give him yesterday. Malediction! And he was laughing at me in his sleeve two years ago, and spoiling the best plan that ever was laid. I was a fool for trusting myself with a rascal who had long-twisted contrivances that nobody could see to the end of but himself."

"A Greek, too, who dropped into Florence with gems packed about him," said Francesco Cei, who had a slight smile of amusement on his face at Spini's fuming. "You did *not* choose your confident very wisely, my Dolfo."

"He's a cursed deal cleverer than you, Francesco, and handsomer too," said Spini, turning on his associate with a general desire to worry anything that presented itself,

"I humbly conceive," said Ser Ceccone, "that Messer Francesco's poetic genius will outweigh ——"

"Yes, yes, rub your hands! I hate that notary's trick of yours," interrupted Spini, whose patronage consisted largely in this sort of frankness. "But there comes Taddeo, or somebody: now's the time! What news, eh?" he went on, as two Compagnacci entered with heated looks.

"Bad!" said one. "The people have made up their minds they were going to have the sacking of Soderini's house, and now they have been balked we shall have them turning on us, if we don't take care. I suspect there are some Mediceans buzzing about among them, and we may see them attacking your palace over the bridge before long, unless we can find a bait for them another way."

"I have it!" said Spini, and seizing Taddeo by the belt he drew him aside to give him directions, while the other went on telling Cei how the Signoria had interfered about Soderini's house.

"Ecco!" exclaimed Spini, presently, giving Taddeo a slight push toward the door. "Go, and make quick work."

CHAPTER LXVII.

WAITING BY THE RIVER.

ABOUT the time when the two Compagnacci went on their errand, there was another man who, on the opposite side of the Arno, was also going out into the chill gray twilight. His errand, apparently, could have no relation to theirs; he was making his way to the brink of the river at a spot which, though within the city walls, was overlooked by no dwellings, and which only seemed the more shrouded and lonely for the warehouses and granaries which at some little distance backward turned their shoulders to the river. There was a sloping width of long grass and rushes made all the more dank by broad gutters which here and there emptied themselves into the Arno.

The gutters and the loneliness were the attraction that drew this man to come and sit down among the grass, and bend over the waters that ran swiftly in the channeled slope at his side. For he had once had a large piece of

bread brought to him by one of those friendly runlets, and more than once a raw carrot and apple-parings. It was worth while to wait for such chances in a place where there was no one to see, and often in his restless wakefulness he came to watch here before daybreak; it might save him for one day the need of that silent begging which consisted in sitting on a church-step by the wayside out beyond the Porta San Frediano.

For Baldassarre hated begging so much that he would perhaps have chosen to die rather than make even that silent appeal, but for one reason that made him desire to live. It was no longer a hope: it was only that possibility which clings to every idea that has taken complete possession of the mind: the sort of possibility that makes a woman watch on a headland for the ship which held something dear, though all her neighbors are certain that the ship was a wreck long years ago. After he had come out of the convent hospital, where the monks of San Miniato had taken care of him as long as he was helpless; after he had watched in vain for the wife who was to help him, and had begun to think that she was dead of the pestilence that seemed to fill all the space since the night he parted from her, he had been unable to conceive any way in which sacred vengeance could satisfy itself through his arm. His knife was gone, and he was too feeble in body to win another by work, too feeble in mind, even if he had had the knife, to contrive that it should serve its one purpose. He was a shattered, bewildered, lonely old man; yet he desired to live: he waited for something of which he had no distinct vision—something dim, formless—that startled him, and made strong pulsations within him, like that unknown thing which we look for when we start from sleep, though no voice or touch has waked us. Baldassarre desired to live; and therefore he crept out in the gray light, and seated himself in the long grass, and watched the waters that had a faint promise in them.

Meanwhile the Compagnacci were busy at their work. The formidable bands of armed men, left to do their will with very little interference from an embarrassed if not conniving Signoria, had parted into two masses, but both were soon making their way by different roads toward the Arno. The smaller mass was making for the Ponte Rubaconte, the larger for the Ponte Vecchio; but in both the same words had passed from mouth to mouth as a signal, and almost every man of the multitude knew that he was

going to the Via de Bardi to sack a house there. If he knew no other reason, could he demand a better?

The armed Compagnacci knew something more, for a brief word of command flies quickly, and the leaders of the two streams of rabble had a perfect understanding that they would meet before a certain house a little toward the eastern end of the Via de Bardi, where the master would probably be in bed, and be surprised in his morning sleep.

But the master of that house was neither sleeping nor in bed; he had not been in bed that night. For Tito's anxiety to quit Florence had been stimulated by the events of the previous day: investigations would follow in which appeals might be made to him delaying his departure: and in delay he had an uneasy sense that there was danger. Falsehood had prospered and waxed strong; but it had nourished the twin life, Fear. He no longer wore his armor, he was no longer afraid of Baldassarre; but from the corpse of that dead fear a spirit had risen—the undying *habit* of fear. He felt he should not be safe till he was out of this fierce, turbid Florence; and now he was ready to go. Maso was to deliver up his house to the new tenant; his horses and mules were awaiting him in San Gallo; Tessa and the children had been lodged for the night in the Borgo outside the gate, and would be dressed in readiness to mount the mules and join him. He descended the stone steps into the courtyard, he passed through the great doorway, not the same Tito, but nearly as brilliant as on the day when he had first entered that house and made the mistake of falling in love with Romola. The mistake was remedied now: the old life was cast off, and was soon to be far behind him.

He turned with rapid steps toward the Piazza dei Mozzi, intending to pass over the Ponte Rubaconte; but as he went along certain sounds came upon his ears that made him turn round and walk yet more quickly in the opposite direction. Was the mob coming into Oltrarno? It was a vexation, for he would have preferred the more private road. He must now go by the Ponte Vecchio; and unpleasant sensations made him draw his mantle close round him, and walk at his utmost speed. There was no one to see him in that gray twilight. But before he reached the end of the Via de Bardi, like sounds fell on his ear again, and this time they were much louder and nearer. Could he have been deceived before? The mob must be coming over the Ponte Vecchio. Again he turned, from an im-

pulse of fear that was stronger than reflection; it was only to be assured that the mob was actually entering the street from the opposite end. He chose not to go back to his house: after all they would not attack *him*. Still, he had some valuables about him; and all things except reason and order are possible with a mob. But necessity does the work of courage. He went on toward the Ponte Vecchio, the rush and the trampling and the confused voices getting so loud before him that he had ceased to hear them behind.

For he had reached the end of the street, and the crowd pouring from the bridge met him at the turning and hemmed in his way. He had not time to wonder at a sudden shout before he felt himself surrounded, not, in the first instance, by an unarmed rabble, but by armed Compagnacci; the next sensation was that his cap fell off, and that he was thrust violently forward amongst the rabble, along the narrow passage of the bridge. Then he distinguished the shouts, "*Piagnone! Medicean! Piagnone!* Throw him over the bridge!"

His mantle was being torn off him with strong pulls that would have throttled him if the fibula had not given way. Then his *scarsella* was snatched at; but all the while he was being hustled and dragged; and the snatch failed—his *scarsella* still hung at his side. Shouting, yelling, half motiveless execration rang stunningly in his ears, spreading even amongst those who had not yet seen him, and only knew there was a man to be reviled. Tito's horrible dread was that he should be struck down or trampled on before he reached the open arches that surmount the centre of the bridge. There was one hope for him that they might throw him over before they had wounded him or beaten the strength out of him; and his whole soul was absorbed in that one hope and its obverse terror.

Yes—they *were* at the arches. In that moment Tito, with bloodless face and eyes dilated, had one of the self-preserving inspirations that come in extremity. With a sudden desperate effort he mastered the clasp of his belt, and flung belt and *scarsella* forward toward a yard of clear space against the parapet, crying in a ringing voice—

"There are diamonds! there is gold!"

In the instant the hold on him was relaxed, and there was a rush toward the *scarsella*. He threw himself on the parapet with a desperate leap, and the next moment

plunged — plunged with a great splash into the dark river far below.

It was his chance of salvation; and it was a good chance. His life had been saved once before by his fine swimming, and as he rose to the surface again after his long dive he had a sense of deliverance. He struck out with all the energy of his strong prime, and the current helped him. If he could only swim beyond the Ponte alla Carrara he might land in a remote part of the city, and even yet reach San Gallo. Life was still before him. And the idiot mob, shouting and bellowing on the bridge there, would think he was drowned.

They did think so. Peering over the parapet, along the dark stream, they could not see afar off the moving blackness of the floating hair, and the velvet tunic-sleeves.

It was only from the other way that a pale olive face could be seen looking white above the dark water: a face not easy even for the indifferent to forget, with its square forehead, the long low arch of the eyebrows, and the long lustrous agate-like eyes. Onward the face went on the dark current, with inflated quivering nostrils, with the blue veins distended on the temples. One bridge was passed — the bridge of Santa Trinità. Should he risk landing now rather than trust to his strength? No. He heard, or fancied he heard, yells and cries pursuing him. Terror pressed him most from the side of his fellow-men: he was less afraid of indefinite chances, and he swam on, panting and straining. He was not so fresh as he would have been if he had passed the night in sleep.

Yet the next bridge — the last bridge — was passed. He was conscious of it; but in the tumult of his blood, he could only feel vaguely that he was safe and might land. But where? The current was having its way with him: he hardly knew where he was: exhaustion was bringing on the dreamy state that precedes unconsciousness.

But now there were eyes that discerned him — aged eyes, strong for the distance. Baldassarre, looking up blankly from the search in the runlet that brought him nothing, had seen a white object coming along the broader stream. Could that be any fortunate chance for *him*? He looked and looked till the object gathered form: then he leaned forward with a start as he sat among the rank green stems, and his eyes seemed to be filled with a new light. Yet he only watched — motionless. Something was being brought to him.

The next instant a man's body was cast violently on the grass two yards from him, and he started forward like a panther, clutching the velvet tunic as he fell forward on the body and flashed a look in the man's face.

Dead—was he dead? The eyes were rigid. But, no, it could not be—Justice had brought him. Men looked dead sometimes, and yet the life came back into them. Baldassarre did not feel feeble in that moment. He knew just what he could do. He got his large fingers within the neck of the tunic and held them there, kneeling on one knee beside the body and watching the face. There was a fierce hope in his heart, but it was mixed with trembling. In his eyes there was only fierceness: all the slow-burning remnant of life within him seemed to have leaped into flame.

Rigid—rigid still. Those eyes with the half-fallen lids were locked against vengeance. *Could* it be that he was dead? There was nothing to measure the time: it seemed long enough for hope to freeze into despair.

Surely at last the eyelids were quivering: the eyes were no longer rigid. There was a vibrating light in them: they opened wide.

"Ah, yes! You see me—you know me!"

Tito knew him; but he did not know whether it was life or death that had brought him into the presence of his injured father. It might be death—and death might mean this chill gloom with the face of the hideous past hanging over him forever.

But now Baldassarre's only dread was, lest the young limbs should escape him. He pressed his knuckles against the round throat, and knelt upon the chest with all the force of his aged frame. Let death come now!

Again he kept his watch on the face. And when the eyes were rigid again, he dared not trust them. He would never lose his hold till some one came and found them. Justice would send some witness, and then he, Baldassarre, would declare that he had killed this traitor, to whom he had once been a father. They would perhaps believe him now, and then he would be content with the struggle of justice on earth—then he would desire to die with his hold on this body, and follow the traitor to hell that he might clutch him there.

And so he knelt, and so he pressed his knuckles against the round throat, without trusting to the seeming death, till the light got strong, and he could kneel no longer.

Then he sat on the body, still clutching the neck of the tunic. But the hours went on, and no witness came. No eyes descried afar off the two human bodies among the tall grass by the riverside. Florence was busy with greater affairs, and the preparation of a deeper tragedy.

Not long after those two bodies were lying in the grass, Savonarola was being tortured, and crying out in his agony, "I will confess!"

It was not until the sun was westward that a wagon drawn by a mild gray ox came to the edge of the grassy margin, and as the man who led it was leaning to gather up the round stones that lay heaped in readiness to be carried away, he detected some startling object in the grass. The aged man had fallen forward, and his dead clutch was on the garment of the other. It was not possible to separate them: nay, it was better to put them into the wagon and carry them as they were into the great Piazza, that notice might be given to the Eight.

As the wagon entered the frequented streets there was a growing crowd escorting it with its strange burden. No one knew the bodies for a long while, for the aged face had fallen forward, half hiding the younger. But before they had been moved out of sight, they had been recognized.

"I know that old man," Piero di Cosimo had testified. "I painted his likeness once. He is the prisoner who clutched Melema on the steps of the Duomo."

"He is perhaps the same old man who appeared at supper in my gardens," said Bernardo Rucellai, one of the Eight. "I had forgotten him. I thought he had died in prison. But there is no knowing the truth now."

Who shall put his finger on the work of justice, and say, "It is there"? Justice is like the Kingdom of God—it is not without us as a fact, it is within us as a great yearning.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

ROMOLA'S WAKING.

ROMOLA in her boat passed from dreaming into long deep sleep, and then again from deep sleep into busy dreaming, till at last she felt herself stretching out her arms in the court of the Bargello, where the flickering flames

of the tapers seemed to get stronger and stronger till the dark scene was blotted out with light. Her eyes opened and she saw it was the light of morning. Her boat was lying still in a little creek; on her right hand lay the speckless sapphire-blue of the Mediterranean; on her left one of those scenes which were and still are repeated again and again like a sweet rhythm, on the shores of that loveliest sea.

In a deep curve of the mountains lay a breadth of green land, curtained by gentle tree-shadowed slopes leaning toward the rocky heights. Up these slopes might be seen here and there, gleaming between the tree-tops, a pathway leading to a little irregular mass of building that seemed to have clambered in a hasty way up the mountain-side, and taken a difficult stand there for the sake of showing the tall belfry as a sight of beauty to the scattered and clustered houses of the village below. The rays of the newly-risen sun fell obliquely on the westward horn of this crescent-shaped nook: all else lay in dewy shadow. No sound came across the stillness; the very waters seemed to have curved themselves there for rest.

The delicious sun-rays fell on Romola and thrilled her gently like a caress. She lay motionless, hardly watching the scene; rather, feeling simply the presence of peace and beauty. While we are still in our youth there can always come, in our early waking, moments when mere passive existence is itself a *Lethe*, when the exquisiteness of subtle indefinite sensation creates a bliss which is without memory and without desire. As the soft warmth penetrated Romola's young limbs, as her eyes rested on this sequestered luxuriance, it seemed that the agitating past had glided away like that dark scene in the *Bargello*, and that the afternoon dreams of her girlhood had really come back to her. For a minute or two the oblivion was untroubled: she did not even think that she could rest here forever, she only felt that she rested. Then she became distinctly conscious that she was lying in the boat which had been bearing her over the waters all through the night. Instead of bringing her to death, it had been the gently lulling cradle of a new life. And in spite of her evening despair she was glad that the morning had come to her again: glad to think that she was resting in the familiar sunlight rather than in the unknown regions of death. *Could* she not rest here? No sound from Florence would reach her. Already oblivion was troubled; from behind the golden

haze were piercing domes and towers and walls, parted by a river and enclosed by the green hills.

She rose from her reclining posture and sat up in the boat, willing, if she could, to resist the rush of thoughts that urged themselves along with the conjecture how far the boat had carried her. Why need she mind? This was a sheltered nook where there were simple villagers who would not harm her. For a little while, at least, she might rest and resolve on nothing. Presently she would go and get some bread and milk, and then she would nestle in the green quiet, and feel that there was a pause in her life. She turned to watch the crescent-shaped valley, that she might get back the soothing sense of peace and beauty which she had felt in her first waking.

She had not been in this attitude of contemplation more than a few minutes when across the stillness there came a piercing cry; not a brief cry, but continuous and more and more intense. Romola felt sure it was the cry of a little child in distress that no one came to help. She started up and put one foot on the side of the boat ready to leap on to the beach; but she paused there and listened: the mother of the child must be near, the cry must soon cease. But it went on, and drew Romola so irresistibly, seeming the more piteous to her for the sense of peace which had preceded it, that she jumped on to the beach and walked many paces before she knew what direction she would take. The cry, she thought, came from some rough garden growth many yards on her right hand, where she saw a half-ruined hovel. She climbed over a low broken stone fence, and made her way across patches of weedy green crops and ripe but neglected corn. The cry grew plainer, and convinced that she was right she hastened toward the hovel; but even in that hurried walk she felt an oppressive change in the air as she left the sea behind. Was there some taint lurking amongst the green luxuriance that had seemed such an inviting shelter from the heat of the coming day? She could see the opening into the hovel now, and the cry was darting through her like a pain. The next moment her foot was within the doorway, but the sight she beheld in the sombre light arrested her with a shock of awe and horror. On the straw, with which the floor was scattered, lay three dead bodies, one of a tall man, one of a girl about eight years old, and one of a young woman whose long black hair was being clutched and pulled by a living child—the child that was sending

forth the piercing cry. Romola's experience in the haunts of death and disease made thought and action prompt: she lifted the little living child, and in trying to soothe it on her bosom, still bent to look at the bodies and see if they were really dead. The strongly marked type of race in their features, and their peculiar garb, made her conjecture that they were Spanish or Portuguese Jews, who had perhaps been put ashore and abandoned there by rapacious sailors, to whom their property remained as a prey. Such things were happening continually to Jews compelled to abandon their homes by the Inquisition: the cruelty of greed thrust them from the sea, and the cruelty of superstition thrust them back to it.

"But, surely," thought Romola, "I shall find some woman in the village whose mother's heart will not let her refuse to tend this helpless child—if the real mother is indeed dead."

This doubt remained, because while the man and girl looked emaciated and also showed signs of having been long dead, the woman seemed to have been hardier, and had not quite lost the robustness of her form. Romola, kneeling, was about to lay her hand on the heart; but as she lifted the piece of yellow woolen drapery that lay across the bosom, she saw the purple spots which marked the familiar pestilence. Then it struck her that if the villagers knew of this, she might have more difficulty than she had expected in getting help from them; they would perhaps shrink from her with that child in her arms. But she had money to offer them, and they would not refuse to give her some goat's milk in exchange for it.

She set out at once toward the village, her mind filled now with the effort to soothe the little dark creature, and with wondering how she should win some woman to be good to it. She could not help hoping a little in a certain awe she had observed herself to inspire, when she appeared, unknown and unexpected, in her religious dress. As she passed across a breadth of cultivated ground, she noticed, with wonder, that little patches of corn mingled with the other crops had been left to over-ripeness untouched by the sickle, and that golden apples and dark figs lay rotting on the weedy earth. There were grassy spaces within sight, but no cow, or sheep, or goat. The stillness began to have something fearful in it to Romola; she hurried along toward the thickest cluster of houses, where there would be the most life to appeal to on behalf of the help-

less life she carried in her arms. But she had picked up two figs, and bit little pieces from the sweet pulp to still the child with.

She entered between two lines of dwellings. It was time that villagers should have been stirring long ago, but not a soul was in sight. The air was becoming more and more oppressive, laden, it seemed, with some horrible impurity. There was a door open; she looked in, and saw grim emptiness. Another open door; and through that she saw a man lying dead with all his garments on, his head lying athwart a spade handle, and an earthenware cruse in his hand, as if he had fallen suddenly.

Romola felt horror taking possession of her. Was she in a village of the unburied dead? She wanted to listen if there were any faint sound, but the child cried out afresh when she ceased to feed it, and the cry filled her ears. At last she saw a figure crawling slowly out of a house, and soon sinking back in a sitting posture against the wall. She hastened toward the figure; it was a young woman in fevered anguish, and she, too, held a pitcher in her hand. As Romola approached her she did not start; the one need was too absorbing for any other idea to impress itself on her.

"Water! get me water!" she said, with a moaning utterance.

Romola stooped to take the pitcher, and said gently in her ear, "You shall have water; can you point toward the well?"

The hand was lifted toward the more distant end of the little street, and Romola set off at once with as much speed as she could use under the difficulty of carrying the pitcher as well as feeding the child. But the little one was getting more content as the morsels of sweet pulp were repeated, and ceased to distress her with its cry, so that she could give a less distracted attention to the objects around her.

The well lay twenty yards or more beyond the end of the street, and as Romola was approaching it her eyes were directed to the opposite green slope immediately below the church. High up, on a patch of grass between the trees, she had descried a cow and a couple of goats, and she tried to trace a line of path that would lead her close to that cheering sight, when once she had done her errand to the well. Occupied in this way, she was not aware that she was very near the well, and that some one approaching it

on the other side had fixed a pair of astonished eyes upon her.

Romola certainly presented a sight which, at that moment and in that place, could hardly have been seen without some pausing and palpitation. With her gaze fixed intently on the distant slope, the long lines of her thick gray garment giving a gliding character to her rapid walk, her hair rolling backward and illuminated on the left side by the sun-rays, the little olive baby on her right arm now looking out with jet-black eyes, she might well startle that youth of fifteen, accustomed to swing the censer in the presence of a Madonna less fair and marvelous than this.

"She carries a pitcher in her hand—to fetch water for the sick. It is the Holy Mother, come to take care of the people who have the pestilence."

It was a sight of awe: she would, perhaps, be angry with those who fetched water for themselves only. The youth flung down his vessel in terror, and Romola, aware now of some one near her, saw the black and white figure fly as if for dear life toward the slope she had just been contemplating. But remembering the parched sufferer, she half-filled her pitcher quickly and hastened back.

Entering the house to look for a small cup, she saw salt meat and meal: there were no signs of want in the dwelling. With nimble movement she seated the baby on the ground, and lifted a cup of water to the sufferer, who drank eagerly and then closed her eyes and leaned her head backward, seeming to give herself up to the sense of relief. Presently she opened her eyes, and, looking at Romola, said languidly—

"Who are you?"

"I came over the sea," said Romola. "I only came this morning. Are all the people dead in these houses?"

"I think they are all ill now—all that are not dead. My father and my sister lie dead up stairs, and there is no one to bury them: and soon I shall die."

"Not so, I hope," said Romola. "I am come to take care of you. I am used to the pestilence; I am not afraid. But there must be some left who are not ill. I saw a youth running toward the mountain when I went to the well."

"I cannot tell. When the pestilence came, a great many people went away, and drove off the cows and goats. Give me more water!"

Romola, suspecting that if she followed the direction of the youth's flight, she should find some men and women who were still healthy and able, determined to seek them out at once, that she might at least win them to take care of the child, and leave her free to come back and see how many living needed help, and how many dead needed burial. She trusted to her powers of persuasion to conquer the aid of the timorous, when once she knew what was to be done.

Promising the sick woman to come back to her, she lifted the dark bantling again, and set off toward the slope. She felt no burden of choice on her now, no longing for death. She was thinking how she would go to the other sufferers, as she had gone to that fevered woman.

But, with the child on her arm, it was not so easy to her as usual to walk up a slope, and it seemed a long while before the winding path took her near the cow and the goats. She was beginning herself to feel faint from heat, hunger and thirst, and as she reached a double turning, she paused to consider whether she would not wait near the cow, which some one was likely to come and milk soon, rather than toil up to the church before she had taken any rest. Raising her eyes to measure the steep distance, she saw peeping between the boughs, not more than five yards off, a broad, round face, watching her attentively, and lower down the black skirt of a priest's garment, and a hand grasping a bucket. She stood mutely observing, and the face, too, remained motionless. Romola had often witnessed the overpowering force of dread in cases of pestilence, and she was cautious.

Raising her voice in a tone of gentle pleading, she said, "I came over the sea. I am hungry, and so is the child. Will you not give us some milk?"

Romola had divined part of the truth, but she had not divined that preoccupation of the priest's mind which charged her words with a strange significance. Only a little while ago, the young acolyte had brought word to the Padre that he had seen the Holy Mother with the Babe, fetching water for the sick: she was as tall as the cypresses, and had a light about her head, and she looked up at the church. The pievano (parish priest) had not listened with entire belief: he had been more than fifty years in the world without having any vision of the Madonna, and he thought the boy might have misinterpreted the unexpected appearance of a villager. But he had been

made uneasy, and before venturing to come down and milk his cow, he had repeated numerous Aves. The pievano's conscience tormented him a little: he trembled at the pestilence, but he also trembled at the thought of the mild-faced Mother, conscious that that Invisible Mercy might demand something more of him than prayers and "Hails." In this state of mind—unable to banish the image the boy had raised of the Mother with the glory about her tending the sick—the pievano had come down to milk his cow, and had suddenly caught sight of Romola pausing at the parted way. Her pleading words, with their strange refinement of tone and accent, instead of being explanatory, had a preternatural sound for him. Yet he did not quite believe he saw the Holy Mother: he was in a state of alarmed hesitation. If anything miraculous were happening, he felt there was no strong presumption that the miracle would be in his favor. He dared not run away; he dared not advance.

"Come down," said Romola, after a pause. "Do not fear. Fear rather to deny food to the hungry when they ask you."

A moment after, the boughs were parted, and the complete figure of a thick-set priest with a broad, harmless face, his black frock much worn and soiled, stood, bucket in hand, looking at her timidly, and still keeping aloof as he took the path toward the cow in silence.

Romola followed him and watched him without speaking again, as he seated himself against the tethered cow, and, when he had nervously drawn some milk, gave it to her in a brass cup he carried with him in the bucket. As Romola put the cup to the lips of the eager child, and afterward drank some milk herself, the Padre observed her from his wooden stool with a timidity that changed its character a little. He recognized the Hebrew baby, he was certain that he had a substantial woman before him; but there was still something strange and unaccountable in Romola's presence in this spot, and the Padre had a presentiment that things were going to change with him. Moreover, that Hebrew was terribly associated with the dread of pestilence.

Nevertheless, when Romola smiled at the little one sucking its own milky lips, and stretched out the brass cup again, saying, "Give us more, good father," he obeyed less nervously than before.

Romola on her side was not unobservant; and when the

second supply of milk had been drunk, she looked down at the round-headed man, and said with mild decision—

“And now tell me, father, how this pestilence came, and why you let your people die without the sacraments, and lie unburied. For I am come over the sea to help those who are left alive—and you, too, will help them now.”

He told her the story of the pestilence: and while he was telling it, the youth, who had fled before, had come peeping and advancing gradually, till at last he stood and watched the scene from behind a neighboring bush.

Three families of Jews, twenty souls in all, had been put ashore many weeks ago, some of them already ill of the pestilence. The villagers, said the priest, had of course refused to give shelter to the miscreants, otherwise than in a distant hovel, and under heaps of straw. But when the strangers had died of the plague, and some of the people had thrown the bodies into the sea, the sea had brought them back again in a great storm, and everybody was smitten with terror. A grave was dug, and the bodies were buried; but then the pestilence attacked the Christians, and the greater number of the villagers went away over the mountain, driving away their few cattle, and carrying provisions. The priest had not fled; he had stayed and prayed for the people, and he had prevailed on the youth Jacopo to stay with him; but he confessed that a mortal terror of the plague had taken hold of him, and he had not dared to go down into the valley.

“You will fear no longer, father,” said Romola, in a tone of encouraging authority; “you will come down with me, and we will see who is living, and we will look for the dead to bury them. I have walked about for months where the pestilence was, and see, I am strong. Jacopo will come with us,” she added, motioning to the peeping lad, who came slowly from behind his defensive bush, as if invisible threads were dragging him.

“Come, Jacopo,” said Romola again, smiling at him, “you will carry the child for me. See! your arms are strong, and I am tired.”

That was a dreadful proposal to Jacopo, and to the priest also; but they were both under a peculiar influence forcing them to obey. The suspicion that Romola was a supernatural form was dissipated, but their minds were filled instead with the more effective sense that she was a human being whom God had sent over the sea to command them.

"Now we will carry down the milk," said Romola, "and see if any one wants it."

So they went all together down the slope, and that morning the sufferers saw help come to them in their despair. There were hardly more than a score alive in the whole valley; but all of these were comforted, most were saved, and the dead were buried.

In this way days, weeks, and months passed with Romola till the men were digging and sowing again, till the women smiled at her as they carried their great vases on their heads to the well, and the Hebrew baby was a tottering tumbling Christian, Benedetto by name, having been baptized in the church on the mountain-side. But by that time she herself was suffering from the fatigue and languor that must come after a continuous strain on mind and body. She had taken for her dwelling one of the houses abandoned by their owners, standing a little aloof from the village street; and here on a thick heap of clean straw—a delicious bed for those who do not dream of down—she felt glad to lie still through most of the daylight hours, taken care of along with the little Benedetto by a woman whom the pestilence had widowed.

Every day the Padre and Jacopo and the small flock of surviving villagers paid their visits to this cottage to see the blessed Lady, and to bring her of their best as an offering—honey, fresh cakes, eggs, and polenta. It was a sight they could none of them forget, a sight they all told of in their old age—how the sweet and sainted lady with her fair face, her golden hair, and her brown eyes that had a blessing in them, lay weary with her labors after she had been sent over the sea to help them in their extremity, and how the queer little black Benedetto used to crawl about the straw by her side and want everything that was brought to her, and she always gave him a bit of what she took, and told them if they loved her they must be good to Benedetto.

Many legends were afterward told in that valley about the blessed Lady who came over the sea, but they were legends by which all who heard might know that in times gone by a woman had done beautiful loving deeds there, rescuing those who were ready to perish.

CHAPTER LXIX.

HOMEWARD.

IN those silent wintry hours when Romola lay resting from her weariness, her mind, traveling back over the past, and gazing across the undefined distance of the future, saw all objects from a new position. Her experience since the moment of her waking in the boat had come to her with as strong an effect as that of the fresh seal on the dissolving wax. She had felt herself without bonds, without motive; sinking in mere egoistic complaining that life could bring her no content; feeling a right to say, "I am tired of life, I want to die." That thought had sobbed within her as she fell asleep, but from the moment after her waking when the cry had drawn her, she had not even reflected, as she used to do in Florence, that she was glad to live because she could lighten sorrow—she had simply lived, with so energetic an impulse to share the life around her, to answer the call of need and do the work which cried aloud to be done, that the reasons for living, enduring, laboring, never took the form of argument.

The experience was like a new baptism to Romola. In Florence the simpler relations of the human being to his fellow-men had been complicated for her with all the special ties of marriage, the State, and religious discipleship, and when these had disappointed her trust, the shock seemed to have shaken her aloof from life and stunned her sympathy. But now she said, "It was mere baseness in me to desire death. If everything else is doubtful, this suffering that I can help is certain; if the glory of the cross is an illusion, the sorrow is only the truer. While the strength is in my arm I will stretch it out to the fainting; while the light visits my eyes they shall seek the forsaken."

And then the past arose with a fresh appeal to her. Her work in this green valley was done, and the emotions that were disengaged from the people immediately around her rushed back into the old deep channels of use and affection. That rare possibility of self-contemplation which comes in any complete severance from our wonted life made her judge herself as she had never done before: the compunction which is inseparable from a sympathetic nature keenly alive to the possible experience of others,

began to stir in her with growing force. She questioned the justness of her own conclusions, of her own deeds: she had been rash, arrogant, always dissatisfied that others were not good enough, while she herself had not been true to what her soul had once recognized as the best. She began to condemn her flight: after all, it had been cowardly self-care; the grounds on which Savoranola had once taken her back were truer, deeper than the grounds she had had for her second flight. How could she feel the needs of others and not feel, above all, the needs of the nearest?

But then came reaction against such self-reproach. The memory of her life with Tito, of the conditions which made their real union impossible, while their external union imposed a set of false duties on her which were essentially the concealment and sanctioning of what her mind revolted from, told her that flight had been her only resource. All minds, except such as are delivered from doubt by dullness of sensibility, must be subject to this recurring conflict where the many-twisted conditions of life have forbidden the fulfillment of a bond. For in strictness there is no replacing of relations: the presence of the new does not nullify the failure and breach of the old. Life has lost its perfection: it has been maimed; and until the wounds are quite scarred, conscience continually casts backward, doubting glances.

Romola shrank with dread from the renewal of her proximity to Tito, and yet she was uneasy that she had put herself out of reach of knowing what was his fate—uneasy that the moment might yet come when he would be in misery and need her. There was still a thread of pain within her, testifying to those words of Fra Girolamo, that she could not cease to be a wife. Could anything utterly cease for her that had once mingled itself with the current of her heart's blood?

Florence, and all her life there, had come back to her like hunger; her feelings could not go wandering after the possible and the vague: their living fibre was fed with the memory of familiar things. And the thought that she had divided herself from them forever became more and more importunate in these hours that were unfilled with action. What if Fra Girolamo had been wrong? What if the life of Florence was a web of inconsistencies? Was she, then, something higher, that she should shake the dust from off her feet, and say, "This world is not good enough for

me"? If she had been really higher, she would not so easily have lost all her trust.

Her indignant grief for her godfather had no longer complete possession of her, and her sense of debt to Savonarola was recovering predominance. Nothing that had come, or was to come, could do away with the fact that there had been a great inspiration in him which had waked a new life in her. Who, in all her experience, could demand the same gratitude from her as he? His errors—might they not bring calamities?

She could not rest. She hardly knew whether it was her strength returning with the budding leaves that made her active again, or whether it was her eager longing to get nearer Florence. She did not imagine herself daring to enter Florence, but the desire to be near enough to learn what was happening there urged itself with a strength that excluded all other purposes.

And one March morning the people in the valley were gathered together to see the blessed Lady depart. Jacopo had fetched a mule for her, and was going with her over the mountains. The Padre, too, was going with her to the nearest town, that he might help her in learning the safest way by which she might get to Pistoja. Her store of trinkets and money, untouched in this valley, was abundant for her needs.

If Romola had been less drawn by the longing that was taking her away, it would have been a hard moment for her when she walked along the village street for the last time, while the Padre and Jacopo, with the mule, were awaiting her near the well. Her steps were hindered by the wailing people, who knelt and kissed her hands, then clung to her skirts and kissed the gray folds, crying, "Ah, why will you go, when the good season is beginning and the crops will be plentiful? Why will you go?"

"Do not be sorry," said Romola, "you are well now, and I shall remember you. I must go and see if my own people want me."

"Ah, yes, if they have the pestilence!"

"Look at us again, Madonna!"

"Yes, yes, we will be good to the little Benedetto!"

At last Romola mounted her mule, but a vigorous screaming from Benedetto as he saw her turn from him in this new position, was an excuse for all the people to follow her and insist that he must ride on the mule's neck to the foot of the slope.

The parting must come at last, but as Romola turned continually before she passed out of sight, she saw the little flock lingering to catch the last waving of her hand.

CHAPTER LXX.

MEETING AGAIN.

ON the fourteenth of April Romola was once more within the walls of Florence. Unable to rest at Pistoja, where contradictory reports reached her about the Trial by Fire, she had gone on to Prato; and was beginning to think that she should be drawn on to Florence in spite of dread, when she encountered that monk of San Spirito who had been her godfather's confessor. From him she learned the full story of Savonarola's arrest, and of her husband's death. This Augustinian monk had been in the stream of people who had followed the wagon with its awful burden into the Piazza, and he could tell her what was generally known in Florence—that Tito had escaped from an assaulting mob by leaping into the Arno, but had been murdered on the bank by an old man who had long had an enmity against him. But Romola understood the catastrophe as no one else did. Of Savonarola the monk told her, in that tone of unfavorable prejudice which was usual in the Black Brethren (*Frati Neri*) toward the brother who showed white under his black, that he had confessed himself a deceiver of the people.

Romola paused no longer. That evening she was in Florence, sitting in agitated silence under the exclamations of joy and wailing, mingled with exuberant narrative, which were poured into her ears by Monna Brigida, who had backslided into false hair in Romola's absence, but now drew it off again and declared she would not mind being gray, if her dear child would stay with her.

Romola was too deeply moved by the main events which she had known before coming to Florence, to be wrought upon by the doubtful gossiping details added in Brigida's narrative. The tragedy of her husband's death, of Fra Girolamo's confession of duplicity under the coercion of torture, left her hardly any power of apprehending minor circumstances. All the mental activity she could exert

under that load of awe-stricken grief, was absorbed by two purposes which must supersede every other: to try and see Savonarola, and to learn what had become of Tessa and the children.

"Tell me, cousin," she said abruptly, when Monna Brigida's tongue had run quite away from troubles into projects of Romola's living with her, "has anything been seen or said since Tito's death of a young woman with two little children?"

Brigida started, rounded her eyes, and lifted up her hands.

"Cristo! no. What! was he so bad as that, my poor child? Ah, then, that was why you went away, and left me word only that you went of your own free will. Well, well; if I'd known that, I shouldn't have thought you so strange and flighty. For I did say to myself, though I didn't tell anybody else, 'What was she to go away from her husband for, leaving him to mischief, only because they cut poor Bernardo's head off? She's got her father's temper,' I said, 'that's what it is.' Well, well; never scold me, child: Bardo *was* fierce, you can't deny it. But if you had only told me the truth, that there was a young hussey and children, I should have understood it all. Anything seen or said of her? No; and the less the better. They say enough of ill about him without that. But since that was the reason you went——"

"No, dear cousin," said Romola, interrupting her earnestly, "pray do not talk so. I wish above all things to find that young woman and her children, and to take care of them. They are quite helpless. Say nothing against it; that is the thing I shall do first of all."

"Well," said Monna Brigida, shrugging her shoulders and lowering her voice with an air of discomfiture, "if that's being a Piagnone, I've been taking peas for paternosters. Why, Fra Girolamo said as good as that widows ought not to marry again. Step in at the door and it's a sin and a shame, it seems; but come down the chimney and you're welcome. *Two* children—Santiddio!"

"Cousin, the poor thing has done no conscious wrong: she is ignorant of everything. I will tell you—but not now."

Early the next morning Romola's steps were directed to the house beyond San Ambrogio where she had once found Tessa; but it was as she had feared: Tessa was gone. Romola conjectured that Tito had sent her away before-

hand to some spot where he had intended to join her, for she did not believe that he would willingly part with those children. It was a painful conjecture, because, if Tessa were out of Florence, there was hardly a chance of finding her, and Romola pictured the childish creature waiting and waiting at some wayside spot in wondering helpless misery. Those who lived near could tell her nothing except that old deaf Lisa had gone away a week ago with her goods, but no one knew where Tessa had gone. Romola saw no further active search open to her; for she had no knowledge that could serve as a starting point for inquiry, and not only her innate reserve but a more noble sensitiveness made her shrink from assuming an attitude of generosity in the eyes of others by publishing Tessa's relation to Tito, along with her own desire to find her. Many days passed in anxious inaction. Even under strong solicitation from other thoughts Romola found her heart palpitating if she caught sight of a pair of round brown legs, or of a short woman in the contadina dress.

She never for a moment told herself that it was heroism, or exalted charity in her to seek these beings; she needed something that she was bound specially to care for; she yearned to clasp the children and make them love her. This at least would be some sweet result, for others as well as herself, from all her past sorrow. It appears there was much property of Tito's to which she had a claim; but she distrusted the cleanness of that money, and she had determined to make it all over to the State, except so much as was equal to the price of her father's library. This would be enough for the modest support of Tessa and the children. But Monna Brigida threw such planning into the background by clamorously insisting that Romola must live with her and never forsake her till she had seen her safe in Paradise—else why had she persuaded her to turn Piagnone?—and if Romola wanted to rear other people's children, she, Monna Brigida, must rear them too. Only they must be found first.

Romola felt the full force of that innuendo. But strong feeling unsatisfied is never without its superstition, either of hope or despair. Romola's was the superstition of hope: *somehow* she was to find that mother and the children. And at last another direction for active inquiry suggested itself. She learned that Tito had provided horses and mules to await him in San Gallo; he was therefore going to leave Florence by the gate of San

Gallo, and she determined, though without much confidence in the issue, to try and ascertain from the gate-keepers if they had observed any one corresponding to the description of Tessa, with her children, to have passed the gates before the morning of the ninth of April. Walking along the Via San Gallo, and looking watchfully about her through her long widow's veil, lest she should miss any object that might aid her, she descried Bratti chaffering with a customer. That roaming man, she thought, might aid her; she would not mind talking of Tessa to *him*. But as she put aside her veil and crossed the street toward him, she saw something hanging from the corner of his basket which made her heart leap with a much stronger hope.

"Bratti, my friend," she said abruptly, "where did you get that necklace?"

"Your servant, madonna," said Bratti, looking round at her very deliberately, his mind not being subject to surprise. "It's a necklace worth money, but I shall get little by it, for my heart's too tender for a trader's; I have promised to keep it in pledge."

"Pray tell me where you got it;—from a little woman named Tessa, is it not true?"

"Ah! if you know her," said Bratti, "and would redeem it of me at a small profit, and give it her again, you'd be doing a charity, for she cried at parting with it—you'd have thought she was running into a brook. It's a small profit I'll charge you. You shall have it for a florin, for I don't like to be hard-hearted."

"Where is she?" said Romola, giving him the money, and unclasping the necklace from the basket in joyful agitation.

"Outside the gate, there, at the other end of the Borgo, at old Sibilla Manetti's: anybody will tell you which is the house."

Romola went along with winged feet, blessing that incident of the Carnival which had made her learn by heart the appearance of this necklace. Soon she was at the house she sought. The young woman and the children were in the inner room—were to have been fetched away a fortnight ago and more—had no money, only their clothes, to pay a poor widow with for their food and lodging. But since madonna knew them—Romola waited to hear no more, but opened the door.

Tessa was seated on the low bed: her crying had passed

into tearless sobs, and she was looking with sad blank eyes at the two children, who were playing in an opposite corner—Lillo covering his head with his skirt and roaring at Ninna to frighten her, then peeping out again to see how she bore it. The door was a little behind Tessa, and she did not turn round when it opened, thinking it was only the old woman: expectation was no longer alive. Romola had thrown aside her veil and paused a moment, holding the necklace in sight. Then she said, in that pure voice that used to cheer her father—

“Tessa!”

Tessa started to her feet and looked round.

“See,” said Romola, clasping the beads on Tessa’s neck, “God has sent me to you again.”

The poor thing screamed and sobbed, and clung to the arms that fastened the necklace. She could not speak. The two children came from their corner, laid hold of their mother’s skirts, and looked up with wide eyes at Romola.

That day they all went home to Monna Brigida’s, in the Borgo degli Albizzi. Romola had made known to Tessa by gentle degrees, that Naldo could never come to her again: not because he was cruel, but because he was dead.

“But be comforted, my Tessa,” said Romola. “I am come to take care of you always. And we have got Lillo and Ninna.”

Monna Brigida’s mouth twitched in the struggle between her awe of Romola and the desire to speak unseasonably.

“Let be, for the present,” she thought; “but it seems to me a thousand years till I tell this little contadina, who seems not to know how many fingers she’s got on her hand, who Romola is. And I *will* tell her some day, else she’ll never know her place. It’s all very well for Romola;—nobody will call their souls their own when she’s by; but if I’m to have this puss-faced minx living in my house she must be humble to me.”

However, Monna Brigida wanted to give the children too many sweets for their supper, and confessed to Romola, the last thing before going to bed, that it would be a shame not to take care of such cherubs.

“But you must give up to me a little, Romola, about their eating, and those things. For you have never had a baby, and I had twins, only they died as soon as they were born.”

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE CONFESSION.

WHEN Romola brought home Tessa and the children, April was already near its close, and the other great anxiety on her mind had been wrought to its highest pitch by the publication in print of Fra Girolamo's Trial, or rather of the confessions drawn from him by the sixteen Florentine citizens commissioned to interrogate him. The appearance of this document, issued by order of the Signoria, had called forth such strong expressions of public opinion and discontent, that severe measures were immediately taken for recalling it. Of course there were copies accidentally mislaid, and a second edition, *not* by order of the Signoria, was soon in the hands of eager readers.

Romola, who began to despair of ever speaking with Fra Girolamo, read this evidence again and again, desiring to judge it by some clearer light than the contradictory impressions that were taking the form of assertions in the mouths of both partisans and enemies.

In the more devout followers of Savonarola his want of constancy under torture, and his retraction of prophetic claims, had produced a consternation too profound to be at once displaced as it ultimately was by the suspicion, which soon grew into a positive datum, that any reported words of his which were in inexplicable contradiction to their faith in him, had not come from the lips of the prophet, but from the falsifying pen of Ser Ceccone, that notary of evil repute, who had made the digest of the examination. But there were obvious facts that at once threw discredit on the printed document. Was not the list of sixteen examiners half made up of the prophet's bitterest enemies? Was not the notorious Dolfo Spini one of the new Eight prematurely elected, in order to load the dice against a man whose ruin had been determined on by the party in power? It was but a murder with slow formalities that was being transacted in the Old Palace. The Signoria had resolved to drive a good bargain with the Pope and the Duke of Milan, by extinguishing the man who was as great a molestation to vicious citizens and greedy foreign tyrants as to a corrupt clergy. The Frate had been doomed beforehand, and the only question that was pretended to exist now was, whether the Republic, in return for a per-

mission to lay a tax on ecclesiastical property, should deliver him alive into the hands of the Pope, or whether the Pope should further concede to the Republic what its dignity demanded—the privilege of hanging and burning its own prophet on its own piazza.

Who, under such circumstances, would give full credit to this so-called confession? If the Frate had denied his prophetic gift, the denial had only been wrenched from him by the agony of torture—agony that, in his sensitive frame, must quickly produce raving. What if these wicked examiners declared that he had only had the torture of the rope and the pulley thrice, and only on one day, and that his confessions had been made when he was under no bodily coercion—was that to be believed? He had been tortured much more; he had been tortured in proportion to the distress his confessions had created in the hearts of those who loved him.

Other friends of Savonarola, who were less ardent partisans, did not doubt the substantial genuineness of the confession, however it might have been colored by the transpositions and additions of the notary; but they argued indignantly that there was nothing which could warrant a condemnation to death, or even to grave punishment. It must be clear to all impartial men that if this examination represented the only evidence against the Frate, he would die, not for any crime, but because he had made himself inconvenient to the Pope, to the rapacious Italian States that wanted to dismember their Tuscan neighbor, and to those unworthy citizens who sought to gratify their private ambition in opposition to the common weal.

Not a shadow of political crime had been proved against him. Not one stain had been detected on his private conduct: his fellow-monks, including one who had formerly been his secretary for several years, and who, with more than the average culture of his companions, had a disposition to criticise Fra Girolamo's rule as Prior, bore testimony, even after the shock of his retractation, to an unimpeachable purity and consistency in his life, which had commanded their unsuspecting veneration. The Pope himself had not been able to raise a charge of heresy against the Frate, except on the ground of disobedience to a mandate and disregard of the sentence of excommunication. It was difficult to justify that breach of discipline by argument, but there was a moral insurgence in the minds of grave men against the Court of Rome, which tended to

confound the theoretic distinction between the Church and churchmen, and to lighten the scandal of disobedience.

Men of ordinary morality and public spirit felt that the triumph of the Frate's enemies was really the triumph of gross license. And keen Florentines like Soderini and Piero Guicciardini may well have had an angry smile on their lips at a severity which dispensed with all law in order to hang and burn a man in whom the seductions of a public career had warped the strictness of his veracity; may well have remarked that if the Frate had mixed a much deeper fraud with a zeal and ability less inconvenient to high personages, the fraud would have been regarded as an excellent oil for ecclesiastical and political wheels.

Nevertheless such shrewd men were forced to admit that, however poor a figure the Florentine government made in its clumsy pretense of a judicial warrant for what had in fact been predetermined as an act of policy, the measures of the Pope against Savonarola were necessary measures of self-defense. Not to try and rid himself of a man who wanted to stir up the Powers of Europe to summon a General Council and depose him, would have been adding ineptitude to iniquity. There was no denying that toward Alexander VI. Savonarola was a rebel, and, what was much more, a dangerous rebel. Florence had heard him say, and had well understood what he meant, that he would not *obey the devil*. It was inevitably a life and death struggle between the Frate and the Pope; but it was less inevitable that Florence should make itself the Pope's executioner.

Romola's ears were filled in this way with the suggestions of a faith still ardent under its wounds, and the suggestions of worldly discernment, judging things according to a very moderate standard of what is possible to human nature. She could be satisfied with neither. She brought to her long meditations over that printed document many painful observations, registered more or less consciously through the years of her discipleship, which whispered a presentiment that Savonarola's retraction of his prophetic claims was not merely a spasmodic effort to escape from torture. But, on the other hand, her soul cried out for some explanation of his lapses which would make it still possible for her to believe that the main striving of his life had been pure and grand. The recent memory of the selfish discontent which had come over her

like a blighting wind along with the loss of her trust in the man who had been for her an incarnation of the highest motives, had produced a reaction which is known to many as a sort of faith that has sprung up to them out of the very depths of their despair. It was impossible, she said now, that the negative disbelieving thoughts which had made her soul arid of all good, could be founded in the truth of things: impossible that it had not been a living spirit, and no hollow pretense, which had once breathed in the Frate's words, and kindled a new life in her. Whatever falsehood had been in him, had been a fall and not a purpose; a gradual entanglement in which he struggled, not a contrivance encouraged by success.

Looking at the printed confessions, she saw many sentences which bore the stamp of bungling fabrication: they had that emphasis and repetition in self-accusation which none but very low hypocrites use to their fellow-men. But the fact that these sentences were in striking opposition, not only to the character of Savonarola, but also to the general tone of the confessions, strengthened the impression that the rest of the text represented in the main what had really fallen from his lips. Hardly a word was dishonorable to him except what turned on his prophetic annunciations. He was unvarying in his statement of the ends he had pursued for Florence, the Church, and the world; and, apart from the mixture of falsity in that claim to special inspiration by which he sought to gain hold of men's minds, there was no admission of having used unworthy means. Even in this confession, and without expurgation of the notary's malign phrases, Fra Girolamo shone forth as a man who had sought his own glory indeed, but sought it by laboring for the very highest end—the moral welfare of men—not by vague exhortations, but by striving to turn beliefs into energies that would work in all the details of life.

“Everything that I have done,” said one memorable passage, which may perhaps have had its erasures and interpolations, “I have done with the design of being forever famous in the present and in future ages; and that I might win credit in Florence; and that nothing of great import should be done without my sanction. And when I had thus established my position in Florence, I had it in my mind to do great things in Italy and beyond Italy, by means of those chief personages with whom I had contracted friendship and consulted on high matters, such as

this of the General Council. And in proportion as my first efforts succeeded, I should have adopted further measures. Above all, when the General Council had once been brought about, I intended to rouse the princes of Christendom, and especially those beyond the borders of Italy, to subdue the infidels. It was not much in my thoughts to get myself made a Cardinal or Pope, for when I should have achieved the work I had in view, I should, without being Pope, have been the first man in the world in the authority I should have possessed, and the reverence that would have been paid me. If I had been made Pope, I would not have refused the office: but it seemed to me that to be the head of that work was a greater thing than to be Pope, because a man without virtue may be Pope; but *such a work as I contemplated demanded a man of excellent virtues.*"

That blending of ambition with belief in the supremacy of goodness made no new tone to Romola, who had been used to hear it in the voice that rang through the Duomo. It was the habit of Savonarola's mind to conceive great things, and to feel that he was the man to do them. Iniquity should be brought low; the cause of justice, purity, and love should triumph; and it should triumph by his voice, by his work, by his blood. In moments of ecstatic contemplation, doubtless, the sense of self melted in the sense of the Unspeakable, and in that part of his experience lay the elements of genuine self-abasement; but in the presence of his fellow-men for whom he was to act, pre-eminence seemed a necessary condition of his life.

And perhaps this confession, even when it described a doubleness that was conscious and deliberate, really implied no more than that wavering of belief concerning his own impressions and motives which most human beings who have not a stupid inflexibility of self-confidence must be liable to under a marked change of external conditions. In a life where the experience was so tumultuously mixed as it must have been in the Frate's, what a possibility was opened for a change of self-judgment, when, instead of eyes that venerated and knees that knelt, instead of a great work on its way to accomplishment, and in its prosperity stamping the agent as a chosen instrument, there came the hooting and the spitting and the curses of the crowd; and then the hard faces of enemies made judges; and then the horrible torture, and with the torture the irrepressible cry, "It is true, what you would have me say:

let me go: do not torture me again: yes, yes, I am guilty. O, God! Thy stroke has reached me!"

As Romola thought of the anguish that must have followed the confession—whether, in the subsequent solitude of the prison, conscience retracted or confirmed the self-taxing words—that anguish seemed to be pressing on her own heart and urging the slow, bitter tears. Every vulgar, self-ignorant person in Florence was glibly pronouncing on this man's demerits, while *he* was knowing a depth of sorrow which can only be known to the soul that has loved and sought the most perfect thing, and beholds itself fallen.

She had not then seen—what she saw afterward—the evidence of the Frate's mental state after he had had thus to lay his mouth in the dust. As the days went by, the reports of new unpublished examinations, eliciting no change of confessions, ceased; Savonarola was left alone in his prison and allowed pen and ink for a while, that, if he liked, he might use his poor bruised and strained right arm to write with. He wrote; but what he wrote was no vindication of his innocence, no protest against the proceedings used toward him: it was a continued colloquy with that divine purity with which he sought complete reunion. It was the outpouring of self-abasement; it was one long cry for inward renovation. No lingering echoes of the old vehement self-assertion, "Look at my work, for it is good, and those who set their faces against it are the children of the devil!" The voice of Sadness tells him, "God placed thee in the midst of the people even as if thou hadst been one of the excellent. In this way thou hast taught others, and hast failed to learn thyself. Thou hast cured others: and thou thyself hast been still diseased. Thy heart was lifted up at the beauty of thy own deeds, and through this thou hast lost thy wisdom and art become, and shalt be to all eternity, nothing. * * * After so many benefits with which God has honored thee, thou art fallen into the depths of the sea; and after so many gifts bestowed on thee, thou, by thy pride and vainglory, hast scandalized all the world." And when Hope speaks and argues that the divine love has not forsaken him, it says nothing now of a great work to be done, but only says, "Thou art not forsaken, else why is thy heart bowed in penitence? That, too, is a gift."

There is no jot of worthy evidence that, from the time of his imprisonment to the supreme moment, Savonarola

thought or spoke of himself as a martyr. The idea of martyrdom had been to him a passion dividing the dream of the future with the triumph of beholding his work achieved. And now, in place of both, had come a resignation which he called by no glorifying name.

But therefore he may the more fitly be called a martyr by his fellow-men to all time. For power rose against him, not because of his sins, but because of his greatness—not because he sought to deceive the world, but because he sought to make it noble. And through that greatness of his he endured a double agony: not only the reviling, and the torture, and the death-throe, but the agony of sinking from the vision of glorious achievement into that deep shadow where he could only say, “I count as nothing: darkness encompasses me: yet the light I saw was the true light.”

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE LAST SILENCE.

ROMOLA had seemed to hear, as if they had been a cry, the words repeated to her by many lips—the words uttered by Savonarola when he took leave of those brethren of San Marco who had come to witness his signature of the confession: “Pray for me, for God has withdrawn from me the spirit of prophecy.”

Those words had shaken her with new doubts as to the mode in which he looked back at the past in moments of complete self-possession. And the doubts were strengthened by more piteous things still, which soon reached her ears.

The nineteenth of May had come, and by that day's sunshine there had entered into Florence the two Papal Commissaries, charged with the completion of Savonarola's trial. They entered amid the acclamations of the people, calling for the death of the Frate. For now the popular cry was, “It is the Frate's deception that has brought on all our misfortunes; let him be burned, and all things right will be done, and our evils will cease.”

The next day it is well certified that there was fresh and fresh torture of the shattered sensitive frame; and now, at

the first sight of the horrible implements, Savonarola, in convulsed agitation, fell on his knees, and in brief passionate words *retracted his confession*, declared that he had spoken falsely in denying his prophetic gift, and if he suffered, he would suffer for the truth—"I told you things that I have spoken, I had them from God."

But not the less the torture was laid upon him, and when he was under it he was asked why he had uttered those retracting words. Men were not demons in those days, and yet nothing but confessions of guilt were held a reason for release from torture. The answer came: "I said it that I might seem good; tear me no more, I will tell you the truth."

There were Florentine assessors at this new trial, and those words of twofold retraction had soon spread. They filled Romola with dismayed uncertainty.

"But"—it flashed across her—"there will come a moment when he may speak. When there is no dread hanging over him but the dread of falsehood, when they have brought him into the presence of death, when he is lifted above the people, and looks upon them for the last time, they cannot hinder him from speaking a last decisive word. I will be there."

Three days after, on the twenty-third of May, 1498, there was again a long narrow platform stretching across the great piazza, from the Palazzo Vecchio toward the Tetta de Pisani. But there was no grove of fuel as before: instead of that, there was one great heap of fuel placed on the circular area which made the termination of the long narrow platform. And above this heap of fuel rose a gibbet with three halters on it; a gibbet which, having two arms, still looked so much like a cross as to make some beholders uncomfortable, though one arm had been truncated to avoid the resemblance.

On the marble terrace of the Palazzo were three tribunals; one near the door for the bishop, who was to perform the ceremony of degradation on Fra Girolamo and the two brethren who were to suffer as his followers and accomplices; another for the papal commissaries, who were to pronounce them heretics and schismatics, and deliver them over to the secular arm; and the third, close to Marzocco, at the corner of the terrace where the platform began, for the Gonfaloniere, and the Eight who were to pronounce the sentence of death.

Again the Piazza was thronged with expectant faces:

again there was to be a great fire kindled. In the majority of the crowd that pressed around the gibbet the expectation was that of ferocious hatred, or of mere hard curiosity to behold a barbarous sight. But there were still many spectators on the wide pavement, on the roofs, and at the windows, who, in the midst of their bitter grief and their own endurance of insult as hypocritical Piagnoni, were not without a lingering hope, even at this eleventh hour, that God would interpose, by some sign, to manifest their beloved prophet as his servant. And there were yet more who looked forward with trembling eagerness, as Romola did, to that final moment when Savonarola might say, "O people, I was innocent of deceit."

Romola was at a window on the north side of the Piazza, far away from the marble terrace where the tribunals stood; and near her, also looking on in painful doubt concerning the man who had won his early reverence, was a young Florentine of two-and-twenty, named Jacopo Nardi, afterward to deserve honor as one of the very few who, feeling Fra Girolamo's eminence, have written about him with the simple desire to be veracious. He had said to Romola, with respectful gentleness, when he saw the struggle in her between her shuddering horror of the scene and her yearning to witness what might happen in the last moment—

"Madonna, there is no need for you to look at these cruel things. I will tell you when he comes out of the Palazzo. Trust to me; I know what you would see."

Romola covered her face, but the hootings that seemed to make the hideous scene still visible could not be shut out. At last her arm was touched, and she heard the words, "He comes." She looked toward the Palace, and could see Savonarola led out in his Dominican garb; could see him standing before the Bishop, and being stripped of the black mantle, the white scapulary and long white tunic, till he stood in a close woolen under-tunic, that told of no sacred office, no rank. He had been degraded, and cut off from the Church Militant.

The baser part of the multitude delight in degradations, apart from any hatred; it is the satire they best understand. There was a fresh hoot of triumph as the three degraded brethren passed on to the tribunal of the Papal Commissaries, who were to pronounce them schismatics and heretics. Did not the prophet look like a schismatic

and heretic now? It is easy to believe in the damnable state of a man who stands stripped and degraded.

Then the third tribunal was passed—that of the Florentine officials who were to pronounce sentence, and amongst whom, even at her distance, Romola could discern the odious figure of Dolfo Spini, indued in the grave black lucco, as one of the Eight.

Then the three figures, in their close white raiment, trod their way along the platform, amidst yells and grating tones of insult.

“Cover your eyes, Madonna,” said Jacopo Nardi; “Fra Girolamo will be the last.”

It was not long before she had to uncover them again. Savonarola was there. He was not far off her now. He had mounted the steps; she could see him look round on the multitude.

But in the same moment expectation died, and she only saw what he was seeing—torches waving to kindle the fuel beneath his dead body, faces glaring with a yet worse light; she only heard what *he* was hearing—gross jests, taunts, and curses.

The moment was past. Her face was covered again, and she only knew that Savonarola's voice had passed into eternal silence.

EPILOGUE.

ON the evening of the twenty-second of May, 1509, five persons, of whose history we have known something, were seated in a handsome upper room opening on to a loggia which, at its right-hand corner, looked all along the Borgo Pinti, and over the city gate toward Fiesole, and the solemn heights beyond it.

At one end of the room was an archway opening into a narrow inner room, hardly more than a recess, where the light fell from above on a small altar covered with fair white linen. Over the altar was a picture, discernible at the distance where the little party sat only as the small full-length portrait of a Dominican Brother. For it was shaded from the light above by overhanging branches and wreaths of flowers, and the fresh tapers below it were unlit.

But it seemed that the decoration of the altar and its recess was not complete. For part of the floor was strewn with a confusion of flowers and green boughs, and among them sat a delicate blue-eyed girl of thirteen, tossing her long light-brown hair out of her eyes, as she made selections for the wreaths she was weaving, or looked up at her mother's work in the same kind, and told her how to do it with a little air of instruction.

For that mother was not very clever at weaving flowers or at any other work. Tessa's fingers had not become more adroit with the years—only very much fatter. She got on slowly and turned her head about a good deal, and asked Ninna's opinion with much deference; for Tessa never ceased to be astonished at the wisdom of her children. She still wore her *contadina* gown: it was only broader than the old one; and there was the silver pin in her rough curly brown hair, and round her neck the memorable necklace, with a red cord under it, that ended mysteriously in her bosom. Her rounded face wore even a more perfect look of childish content than in her younger days: everybody was so good in the world, Tessa thought; even Monna Brigida never found fault with her now, and did little else than sleep, which was an amiable practice in everybody, and one that Tessa liked for herself.

Monna Brigida was asleep at this moment, in a straight-backed arm-chair, a couple of yards off. Her hair, parting backward under her black hood, had that soft whiteness which is not like snow or anything else, but is simply the lovely whiteness of aged hair. Her chin had sunk on her bosom, and her hands rested on the elbow of her chair. She had not been weaving flowers or doing anything else: she had only been looking on as usual, and as usual had fallen asleep.

The other two figures were seated farther off, at the wide doorway that opened on to the loggia. Lillo sat on the ground with his back against the angle of the door-post, and his long legs stretched out, while he held a large book open on his knee, and occasionally made a dash with his hand at an inquisitive fly, with an air of interest stronger than that excited by the finely-printed copy of Petrarch which he kept open at one place, as if he were learning something by heart.

Romola sat nearly opposite Lillo, but she was not observing him. Her hands were crossed on her lap and her eyes were fixed absently on the distant mountains: she was evi-

dently unconscious of anything around her. An eager life had left its marks upon her: the finely-moulded cheek had sunk a little, the golden crown was less massive; but there was a placidity in Romola's face which had never belonged to it in youth. It is but once that we can know our worst sorrows, and Romola had known them while life was new.

Absorbed in this way, she was not at first aware that Lillo had ceased to look at his book, and was watching her with a slightly impatient air, which meant that he wanted to talk to her, but was not quite sure whether she would like that entertainment just now. But persevering looks made themselves felt at last. Romola did presently turn away her eyes from the distance and met Lillo's impatient dark gaze with a brighter and brighter smile. He shuffled along the floor, still keeping the book on his lap, till he got close to her and lodged his chin on her knee.

"What is it, Lillo?" said Romola, pulling his hair back from his brow. Lillo was a handsome lad, but his features were turning out to be more massive and less regular than his father's. The blood of the Tuscan peasant was in his veins.

"Mamma Romola, what am I to be?" he said, well contented that there was a prospect of talking till it would be too late to con "*Spirto gentil*" any longer.

"What should you like to be, Lillo? You might be a scholar. My father was a scholar, you know, and taught me a great deal. That is the reason why I can teach you."

"Yes," said Lillo, rather hesitatingly. "But he is old and blind in the picture. Did he get a great deal of glory?"

"Not much, Lillo. The world was not always very kind to him, and he saw meaner men than himself put into higher places, because they could flatter and say what was false. And then his dear son thought it right to leave him and become a monk; and after that, my father, being blind and lonely, felt unable to do the things that would have made his learning of greater use to men, so that he might still have lived in his works after he was in his grave."

"I should not like that sort of life," said Lillo. "I should like to be something that would make me a great man, and very happy besides—something that would not hinder me from having a good deal of pleasure."

“That is not easy, my Lillo. It is only a poor sort of happiness that could ever come by caring very much about our own narrow pleasures. We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts, and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it, that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good. There are so many things wrong and difficult in the world, that no man can be great—he can hardly keep himself from wickedness—unless he gives up thinking much about pleasure or rewards, and gets strength to endure what is hard and painful. My father had the greatness that belongs to integrity; he chose poverty and obscurity rather than falsehood. And there was Fra Girolamo—you know why I keep to-morrow sacred: *he* had the greatness which belongs to a life spent in struggling against powerful wrong, and in trying to raise men to the highest deeds they are capable of. And so, my Lillo, if you mean to act nobly and seek to know the best things God has put within reach of men, you must learn to fix your mind on that end, and not on what will happen to you because of it. And remember, if you were to choose something lower, and make it the rule of your life to seek your own pleasure and escape from what is disagreeable, calamity might come just the same; and it would be calamity falling on a base mind, which is the one form of sorrow that has no balm in it, and that may well make a man say,—‘It would have been better for me if I had never been born.’ I will tell you something, Lillo.”

Romola paused for a moment. She had taken Lillo's cheeks between her hands, and his young eyes were meeting hers.

“There was a man to whom I was very near, so that I could see a great deal of his life, who made almost every one fond of him, for he was young, and clever, and beautiful, and his manners to all were gentle and kind. I believe, when I first knew him, he never thought of anything cruel or base. But because he tried to slip away from everything that was unpleasant, and cared for nothing else so much as his own safety, he came at last to commit some of the basest deeds—such as make men infamous. He denied his father, and left him to misery; he betrayed every trust that was reposed in him, that he

might keep himself safe and get rich and prosperous. Yet calamity overtook him."

Again Romola paused. Her voice was unsteady, and Lillo was looking up at her with awed wonder.

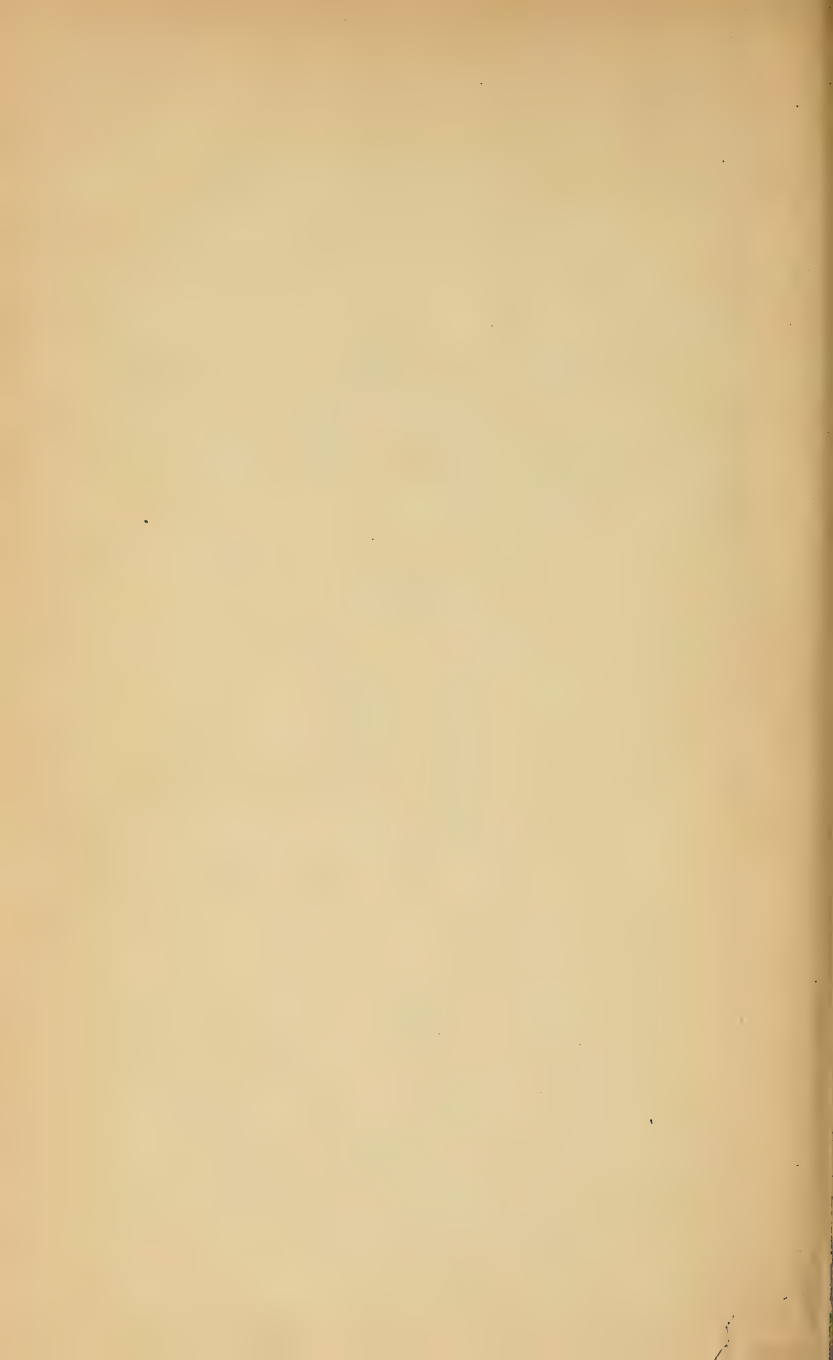
"Another time, my Lillo—I will tell you another time. See, there are our old Piero di Cósimo and Nello coming up the Borgo Pinti, bringing us their flowers. Let us go and wave our hands to them, that they may know we see them."

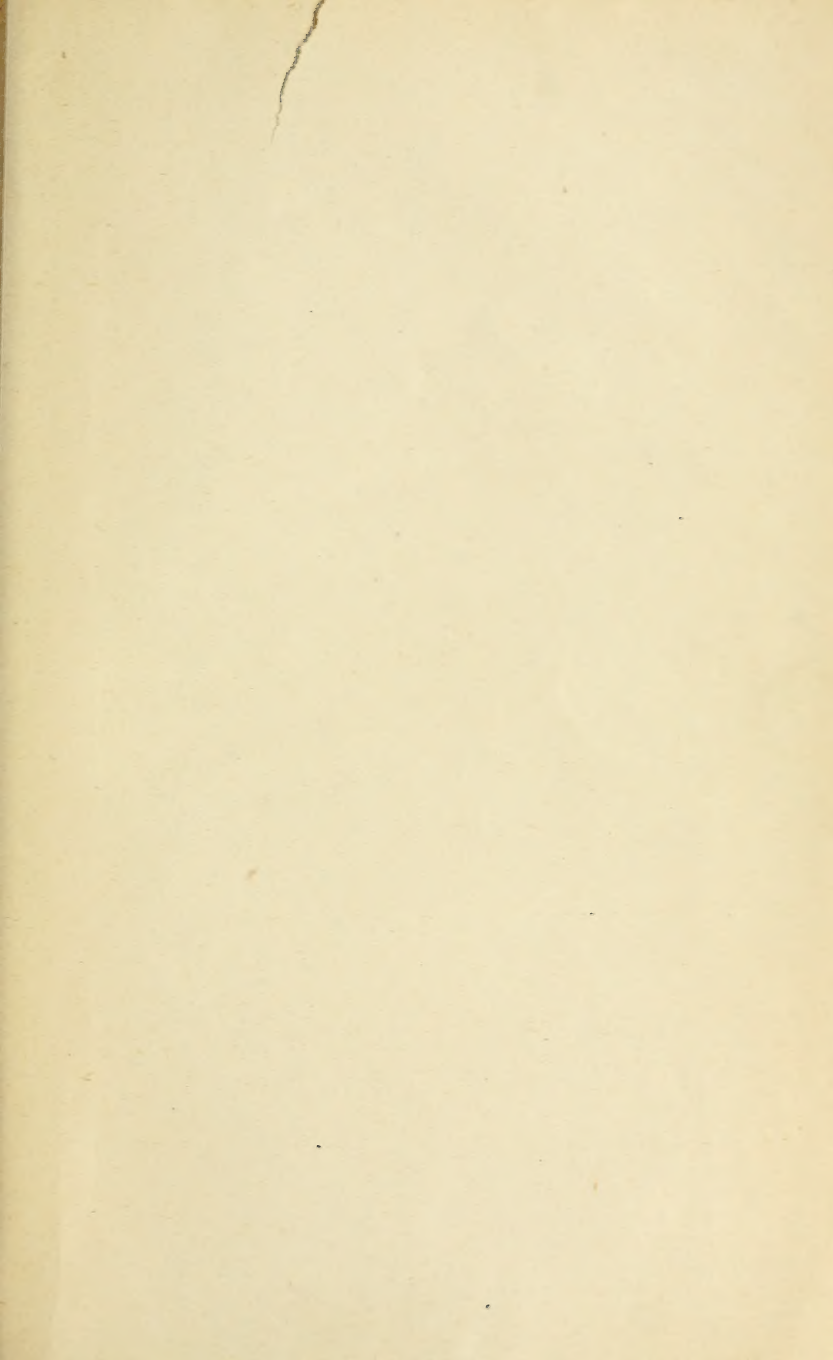
"How queer old Piero is!" said Lillo, as they stood at the corner of the loggia, watching the advancing figures.

"He abuses you for dressing the altar, and thinking so much of Fra Girolamo, and yet he brings you the flowers."

"Never mind," said Romola. "There are many good people who did not love Fra Girolamo. Perhaps I should never have learned to love him if he had not helped me when I was in great need."

THE END.





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